

# THE HINDU

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SPORTS

## TENNIS

Agassi looks upto fatherhood

## Talk, but desist from jehad, PM tells Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, JULY 24

IN a firm message to Pakistan, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee today bluntly told Islamabad that killings of innocent people in Jammu and Kashmir cannot be "glorified" as "Jehad" but voiced India's readiness to engage in "quiet, serious diplomacy" for a relationship of peace, friendship and cooperation.

Vajpayee, in identical statements in both Houses of Parliament, blamed Pakistan for its refusal to end cross-border terrorism, saying this was the "main hurdle" in the creation of a conducive atmosphere.

"We cannot ignore the fact of terrorism and violence in the state, which is exported from across the borders. We cannot accept that the insurgency in J and K today, with its foreign mercenaries and generous assistance from abroad, is anything but terrorism," he said.

The Prime Minister, who gave an overview of the Agra summit, made it clear that India would continue to seek dialogue and reconciliation with Pakistan.

A structured discussion on the

## Sinha stays: PM

NEW DELHI: PRIME Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Tuesday rejected the Opposition demand for the resignation of Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha over the UTI fiasco. Responding to queries from BJP MPs at the Parliamentary Party meeting here on the UTI fiasco, specially the fate of small investors, he said all steps were being taken to revive the UTI and "the question of his (Sinha's) resignation does not arise" as he has not done anything for which he should resign, party spokesman V K Malhotra told reporters.

summit would be held in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha enabling members to seek clarification from the Government.

New Delhi, Vajpayee said, will persist with its efforts to convince Pakistan that bilateral cooperation "should not be held hostage to the resolution of any one issue".

Debunking reports that the talks had been a failure, he said "though we could not conclude a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# Sonia harps on Agra failure

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 24

CONGRESS PRESIDENT Sonia Gandhi today dubbed the Agra summit a "major disappointment" and said her party was "still in the dark on what the Government had in mind when it decided to call the bilateral summit."

Addressing a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party, Gandhi maintained that she had no intentions to turn the failure of the Agra summit into a partisan issue. "But I will be falling in my duty if I don't draw attention to the inapt manner in which Agra was handled before, during and after the summit," she said.

She expressed her condolences to the family members of those killed by "Pakistan-backed terrorists" in Doda and during the Amarnath Yatra. "The Government was not clear about its objectives (at Agra). It had not done its homework and had no focus. Even now confusion reigns supreme."



AP/PTI PHOTO

Sonia Gandhi meets the US assistant secretary for South Asia, Christina Rocca, in New Delhi on Tuesday.

The Congress president also dwelt on other issues, which had "put the Government in bad light". Referring to the UTI mud-

time in three years that "the future of over 20 million UTI investors was in jeopardy". "The Government cannot feign ignorance and absolve itself of any

responsibility," she said. Giving an indication of the Congress' strategy for the monsoon session of Parliament, Gandhi took the Government to task for the crisis in the North-East, its failure to file a proper notification for resumption of the Ayodhya case against the three Union Ministers, "dragging its feet on the Tehelka inquiry" and for not protecting the interests of farmers.

Party spokesperson Jaipal Reddy described Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's "six-minute statement" in Parliament as an "anti-climax". "It was full of diplomatic expressions but conveyed little."

Speaking at a separate press meet, Reddy said all hopes that Vajpayee would provide a befitting reply to the media offensive launched by General Musharraf were dashed. "While speaking on the floor of the House, the PM's statement was highly defensive in its tone and tenor. On all controversial issues it was conspicuous by its silence," he said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# 'Lack of structure derailed summit'

NILOVA ROY CHAUDHURY  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 24. — Foreign ministry officials have their own perception of why the summit-level talks had failed and Pakistan managed to walk away with the honours.

According to some senior officials, despite India inviting Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf over for talks, the government allowed Pakistan to set the agenda by its refusal to espouse a structured agenda through pre-summit official-level talks which could have laid out a structure.

"It was not only the decision to send the DGMOs (directors-general of military operations) which they refused," an official said. "We should have insisted on some kind of official structure prior to the talks."

"We have had many summits in the past, but there has been solid work beforehand, and drafts readied, making those a success," a senior official said.

"It's all very well to expect personal chemistry between the leaders to make decisions, but you cannot have foreign service professionals just dotting the Is and crossing the Ts," a senior official said. "The reason the summit failed was because the government, on both sides, failed to utilise the structure at their command" in the form of the foreign service officials drafting out possible areas of agreement. "There were just not enough officials to provide necessary inputs," the official said. "After all," an official said, "you need to have some form of structure by which you can set the agenda for broad areas of agreement. That is what makes a summit a success."

Another area where the political leadership erred, some officials felt, was in not correctly assessing the other party. "India mistakenly assumed that it could do business with Gen Musharraf," an official said, while Pakistan mistakenly assumed that India "had extended the invitation from a position of weakness."

The ceasefire having failed to make the desired impact, Pakistan thought that the "weary armed forces" combating insurgency in J&K had forced the government to invite Gen Musharraf in a bid to make peace. Both impressions were soon dispelled, making it difficult to agree to any joint statements.

The government has been widely criticised by Opposition parties after the summit-level meeting failed to come up with a mutually-agreed joint document, for going into the summit "without adequate preparation" and a section of the foreign office bureaucracy is trying to exonerate itself from the blame by being critical of the way the summit was conducted.

'Rivals and other countries  
pushed PM into summit'

# BJP dumps Agra on Opposition

## OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, July 23: As Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee braced to ride the summit storm likely to strike Parliament tomorrow, the BJP dealt a blow from within by claiming that the invitation to Pervez Musharraf was sent on the Opposition's "insistence".

Stating this, BJP spokesman V.K. Malhotra added that "other countries" too played a role in getting the Pakistani leader called to India for talks. The Left parties have been insisting that the US was instrumental in forcing the government to invite Musharraf.

Malhotra said the "Opposition and other countries also wanted talks to be held". Pressed whether he meant that Vajpayee was forced by the Opposition to call the general, Malhotra asserted: "No, they insisted."

His remarks could embarrass the government as Vajpayee is expected to make a statement in Parliament tomorrow on why the talks with Musharraf collapsed.

Asked who, the NDA government or the Opposition, was responsible for framing foreign policy, Malhotra said: "Let there be a national consensus (on whether to continue the talks or not)." The Prime Minister should talk to all Opposition parties and then decide, he said, adding: "All want the dialogue to continue."

Leaving the government open to ridicule that the Opposition was doing the thinking for it, the spokesman said: "The Opposition

parties should also come forward and say whether the Prime Minister should accept Musharraf's invitation (to visit Islamabad)."

Delhi signalled it was not totally breaking away from the talks process by agreeing to keep contact with Pakistan alive on the official level but going slow on Vajpayee's return visit to Islamabad.

Foreign secretary Chokila Iyer will meet her Pakistani counterpart Inamul Haq on the sidelines of the two-day Saarc meeting in Colombo beginning August 8.

Though reports from Islamabad suggested that Pakistan had sent separate formal invites to Vajpayee and foreign minister Jaswant Singh, officials here denied receiving any. Foreign ministry spokesperson Nirupama Rao said a final decision on the timing of the visit would be taken only after the invites landed.

Post-summit ties between the neighbours were taken up by US assistant secretary of state Christina Rocca — on a "familiarisation visit" to South Asia — at a meeting with Singh.

Rocca put at rest speculation that the US would be happy to mediate between India and Pakistan. She made it clear that there had been no change in Washington's stated policy on either country. Rocca's remarks are being seen as assurance from the Bush administration that it will not actively interfere in improving ties between the countries but only occasionally nudge them back to the talks table.

29/7

## Omar's shift to MEA significant

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JULY 23. The shifting of the Union Minister of State for Commerce, Mr. Omar Abdullah, to the External Affairs Ministry is a strong indicator of the Government's intention to strengthen its position on the Kashmir issue.

Since Mr. Abdullah is the only member from Jammu and Kashmir in the Council of Ministers and happens to be the grandson of the late Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, his main job will be that of an image-builder on Kashmir. The Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee's decision, especially in the wake of the setback at Agra, conveys a lot about the Government's plans on the future strategy vis-a-vis Kashmir. Focussing on the centrality of Kashmir at the summit and after, the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, succeeded in making it an issue which had been pushed to the background by the earlier bold initiatives of Mr. Vajpayee which included the unilateral ceasefire as also his invitation to the General. While it did not make much impact at the ground level, the ceasefire yielded good results internationally and was termed a bold step by powers such as the United States. With these gains hav-

ing been sidelined, a damage control exercise would be in order.

With Mr. Omar Abdullah moving to the MEA, New Delhi is planning to reshape its Kashmir policy. He will be in the forefront of advocating India's stand on Kashmir and countering Pakistan's claim, particularly in Muslim countries. An articulate politician as he has turned out to be, he was recently chosen by the Prime Minister for his team to Malaysia and Iran.

A report said the Malaysian President, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, was surprised to see him and was quoted as saying, "we were thinking that there was strife in Kashmir and were not expecting a Kashmiri Muslim in the Indian Government." Similarly, when Mr. Vajpayee went to meet Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, only Mr. Omar accompanied him.

Later, he was sent to Libya as part of India's campaign in Muslim countries. Officials who know Mr. Omar closely in Delhi are impressed with his style of functioning. "His shift to the MEA will help the Government to a great extent in its stand on Kashmir, especially in Muslim countries," said Mr. Tahir Mohiuddin, editor of the mass circulated Urdu weekly *Chattan*.

# No US mediation without consent

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 23

ON HER maiden visit to India, the United States Assistant Secretary for South Asia, Christina B. Rocca, today ruled out any change in the stated position of Washington on mediation in the Indo-Pak dispute. The US, she said, is not going to offer its services for bringing about a resolution unless both sides want it. She effectively closed the speculation created over a recent remark by Secretary of State Colin Powell, which was interpreted as a departure from the time-tested US line.

Dressed in casual clothes, Rocca, a former CIA official who was closely involved in Afghanistan during the Mujahideen-Soviet war, said she was here on a familiarisation trip. She called on External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh, her counterparts in the Ministry of External Affairs, and made a significant call on the Ministries of Power and Finance. Sources said Rocca raised the issue of the Enron-Indian Government standoff that was creating obstacles to greater flow of US investment to India.

She hoped the Government would intervene to ensure an amicable settlement and was assured by Power Ministry officials that the matter was being



Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh with US Assistant Secretary for South Asia Christina Rocca at Singh's office in New Delhi on Monday.

looked into. She confirmed that the United States Trade Representative, Richard B. Zoellick, would be visiting India early next month.

Rocca got a briefing from the External Affairs Ministry officials on the outcome of the

recent Agra Summit between Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. The much-awaited US view is likely to be known in Rocca's forthcoming first Press conference in New Delhi scheduled for tomorrow.

She is expected to visit Pakistan next week.

Earlier in the day, an MEA spokesperson said: "The US is aware of our position. We have on every occasion pointed out that outstanding issues between India and Pakistan must be

resolved bilaterally."

On US Secretary of State Colin Powell's comments that Washington could lend its good offices to help India and Pakistan improve their relations, she said: "Any outside involvement in this process does not arise."

# Foreign secy meet on the cards

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 23

FOREIGN SECRETARY Chokila Iyer may hold a meeting with her Pakistani counterpart Inam-ul-Haque in August even as Delhi waits for a formal invitation sent over the weekend from Islamabad to Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh for further talks.

The meeting between Iyer and Haque may be held on the sidelines of the scheduled Special Session of the Saarc foreign secretaries in Colombo on August 9 and 10. The summit was originally scheduled for early June but was cancelled following the palace massacre in Kathmandu.

India is pushing for a more structured preparatory process ahead of another Musharraf-Vajpayee Summit. Had the June event been held, it would have afforded Delhi an opportunity to hold discussions on an agenda.

Following the failure of the Agra summit, Jaswant Singh revealed that the Pakistan resistance to the idea of official-level preparations was a primary cause for the deadlock on July 16. Neither country could agree on the formulations to go into a joint declaration. The Agra summit also did not produce an

## 'POW ISSUE NOT CLOSED'

A DAY after Pakistan's claim that it had not come across any traces of Indian prisoners of war in its jails, India today said the matter was not "closed" and it would continue to take up the issue with Islamabad.

"As far as we are concerned, the matter is not closed. Until we receive a satisfactory response that there is a closure to it, we will continue to take up the issue with Pakistan because the families of POWs continue to maintain, based on whatever evidence, that soldiers are still in Pakistan's custody," an External Affairs Ministry spokesperson told newsmen.

PTI, New Delhi

agreement on reviving Saarc.

The agenda of the Colombo meeting is how to revive the Saarc process. India had agreed to participate in it last December when the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister had pointed out that Saarc had lost direction following the Indo-Pak standoff.

India agreed to send its foreign secretary to a meeting of this forum even before changing its policy on having summit-level talks with Pakistan. But now that the summit is over, the question haunting is whether or not a Saarc conference would be held.

# Media and foreign policy

By C. Raja Mohan 2877  
49-13

**NEW DELHI, JULY 22.** Is there a fundamental contradiction between the necessity of talking in secret with a foreign government on the one hand and informing one's own media about that negotiation on the other?

As it fends off criticism on its handling of the summit level talks with Pakistan at Agra, the Government appears strongly convinced that it could not have conducted sensitive negotiations with Pakistan, except in secret. But the media believes that it has been badly let down by the Government's severe restriction of information flow during two days of intense negotiations at Agra. And in comparison, Pakistani officials had kept their own media well-informed of the state of play.

Gen. Musharraf and his media managers are patting themselves on the back for effectively shaping the popular perceptions of the summit. India, which initiated the process, is forced on to the political defensive.

And as partisan politics takes over the debate on engaging Pakistan, India will appear even more divided and lost in its incipient parliamentary debate on who lost Agra.

While the Government is iterating the classical principles of diplomacy, the world has changed a lot. Media today is far more intrusive than ever before and has indeed complicated the business of diplomacy and negotiation between nations. It scrutinises every tentative idea, each trial balloon, every proposal aimed at teasing the other side and forces public responses from different political formations within the country and from across the border.

Media power is a reality that cannot be wished away. Political leaders have come to terms with the new media realities in the rough and tumble of domestic politics. It is time our diplomatic establishment too recognised the new media imperative. Working with the electronic media and the internet could generate "force multipliers" for Indian diplomacy. Working against them would only produce negative outcomes.

The media does not expect every detail to be put out during the negotiation. But the hungry monster that it is, media expects to be fed frequently. In any event, one would think shaping the image of the evening TV news bulletin and the headline in the morning newspaper is in the interest of the Government itself.

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While India holds on to the principle of confidentiality in negotiations, Pakistan is leaking various drafts of the Agra summit talks to the public. A leading Indian weekly has begun to carry them on its website.

Greater transparency will, inevitably if somewhat chaotically, be forced on the negotiating process between India and Pakistan in the coming years and months.

Instead of opposing it, the Government needs to initiate serious reforms in its information-sharing and media management pol-

## DIPLOMATIC NOTEBOOK

icies, now widely termed as public diplomacy.

Getting the foreign policy establishment to imbibe the virtues of public diplomacy must be a key element of the long overdue security sector reforms in India.

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Mr. Vivek Katju will soon head out as India's ambassador to Myanmar. For nearly six years, Mr. Katju has been Joint Secretary in-charge of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran in the Ministry of External Affairs.

Even as Governments rose and fell since the mid 1990s, continuity in policy was maintained by the extended tenure of some key officials at the Foreign Office. Mr. Katju was one of them. His tenure saw the full spectrum of diplomatic developments between India and Pakistan.

There was the renewal of engagement between the two nations by Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral and Mr. Nawaz Sharif and the formal inclusion of Jammu and Kashmir on the agen-

da in 1997. The nuclear tests of May 1998 were followed by meetings between the two Prime Ministers in New York, the bus journey to Lahore by Mr. Vajpayee in February 1999 and the Kargil war. Cut then to the coup by Gen. Pervez Musharraf, the Kandahar crisis and finally the Agra summit.

In coping with the different shades of Pakistan, Mr. Katju has acquired an awesome reputation for obduracy. But many believe that being stubborn comes with the job. In the trenches of the daily diplomatic warfare with Pakistan, tenacity in defending traditional positions and skepticism about "creative diplomacy" seem to be valued by the Foreign Office.

Mr. Katju's successor will be Mr. Arun Singh who recently returned from Moscow as the political counsellor in the Indian mission there and is the Joint Secretary dealing with political developments in the United Nations.

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The new U.S. Ambassador to India, Mr. Robert Blackwill, is arriving here this week. His reputation as a man who wants to drive Indo-U.S. relations forward at a rapid pace has arrived long before him. He will be eager to present his credentials quickly to the Indian President and get on with the job. But what are "credentials?"

Credentials are letters the Ambassador carries from his Head of State and presents to the chief of the host nation. The letters, which are termed "letters of credence" request the receiving Head of State to give "full credence" to what the ambassador will say on behalf of his Government.

An ambassador is not formally recognised as such by the host country until he has presented his credentials; until then he cannot act in his official capacity outside the embassy.

When nations have good relations, as India and the U.S. do now, these become mere formalities. Most ambassadors begin their work even before they officially present their credentials.

# Could MEA spokesperson have gone beyond her brief?

By Atul Aneja

110-8  
07/7

**NEW DELHI, JULY 21.** As the dust begins to settle on the Agra summit and post-mortem gather momentum, "media management" entrusted to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has come in for sharp criticism.

Ms. Nirupama Rao, newly-appointed spokesperson for the Ministry, has been fiercely, and many feel unfairly, attacked for the "media fiasco" at Agra.

Is the anger against Ms. Rao justified? Could the MEA's external publicity division have done better? In briefing halls, crowded cafeterias or any other assemblage of journalists, an end to the discussion on this does not appear to be in sight.

The themes agitating the media are familiar. One revolves around Ms. Rao's scarce presence at the media centre at the Mughal Sheraton hotel in Agra. The other is her terse Government statements on the happenings in the Jaypee Palace Hotel where the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, were holding endless rounds of talks. Ms. Rao's refusal to take questions on the statements she read out has also been commented upon.

While acknowledging that the media's

grouse may not be unfounded, official sources observing the developments have an explanation. Ms. Rao, they say, could not have gone beyond her brief drawn by senior members of the Indian delegation. The MEA, for instance, had decided that it would not conduct diplomacy through the media while the talks were on. It was this understanding that was reflected in the statements Ms. Rao read out. In no way could an officer of the Joint Secretary rank flout the iron-clad parameters she had been asked to uphold before the media.

Neither can she be blamed for not taking questions, for the decision against a question-and-answer session was also taken at the top. In other words, Ms. Rao was asked to conduct before the media a performance rigidly choreographed by her superiors.

For most of the day on July 16, Ms. Rao was absent at the media centre — for which she has been severely criticised. But her advocates say it is unfair to blame her. She had to be at the Jaypee Palace hotel where expectations were high that a joint declaration could be signed any moment after noon.

By that afternoon there was no change in Gen. Musharraf's plan to leave for Ajmer around 2 p.m., reinforcing the

expectation of a joint declaration. Ms. Rao, therefore, had to be in the hotel to meet the 2 p.m. deadline and also arrange a press conference which was also planned if the talks succeeded.

But with a breakthrough turning elusive, the schedule for the signing ceremony and the press conference kept slipping. In confining herself to the hotel till about midnight, Ms. Rao was a prisoner of a highly dynamic and unpredictable situation.

As for her unavailability during the summit, sources clarified that her cellular phone number had been widely distributed to Indian mediapersons.

Interaction with the media became unsavoury when Ms. Rao was heckled by a group of angry journalists, mostly from Pakistan. They blamed her for standing in the way of a midnight press conference by Gen. Musharraf at the Amar Vilas hotel. Sources say that Ms. Rao could not be held responsible for this as the decision not to hold the press conference was taken on security considerations.

While the Pakistani Government spokesman, Mr. A.A. Gondal, has expressed regret over the incident, no such apology, contrary to media reports, has come from any diplomat of the Pakistani High Commission.



9 F Pwly  
10/8

# Govt. accused of 'diplomatic paralysis'

21/7

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JULY 21.** The former External Affairs Minister and Chairman of the AICC's Foreign Affairs department, Mr. Natwar Singh, today joined issue with the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, over his remarks at Friday's press conference asking India to accept the reality on Jammu and Kashmir. "He is all the time talking of accepting reality but I am afraid he is not doing it himself, as far as Jammu and Kashmir is concerned the reality is that it is an integral part of India and will remain so," Mr. Singh, said.

Talking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Natwar Singh, said that the Pakistan President's obsession with Kashmir prevented him from appreciating the secular, democratic ethos of the country. "The General's constant reference to what is happening in Kashmir as a freedom struggle only puts up the backs of hundreds of millions of Indians" Mr. Singh said.

Mr. Singh was also not pleased at the manner in which the Government went about the summit and also its response to the developments after the conclusion of the summit. "The Government of India was unable to handle him satisfactorily", he said.

He was particularly critical at the casual manner in which the Government approached the summit. In his view not only were the preparations inadequate, the Government also did not appear clear about what it wanted out of the summit, or the objectives that it hoped to achieve in the discussions. "Even for

a Joint-Secretary-level bilateral meeting more preparations are made" Mr. Singh remarked caustically.

Even at Agra, in Mr. Singh's opinion, the Government allowed Pakistan to have a field day, "they were unaware of what was happening at the breakfast meeting and when they came to know, they did little about it". He also asked the Government to explain why the Prime Minister suddenly decided to invite the General on May 23. "There was no perceptible change in the situation on the border, terrorism was continuing then why this 180 degrees turn?", Mr. Singh asked.

Mr. Singh was also critical of the Government's reported decision to give the Shimla Agreement a burial. He said Pakistan's attempt had been to bypass the Shimla Agreement because it makes bilateralism the bedrock of relations. However what appears to have irked him more is the Indian Government's readiness to bypass the agreement. "The Prime Minister must clarify on why the Government agreed not to mention the Shimla or the Lahore Declaration", Mr. Singh asked.

He said that though there was no breakthrough at Agra, efforts must now be made to ensure that there was no breakdown. "The process must continue but we should be better prepared for the next encounter."

Elsewhere too the party stepped up the heat on the Government accusing it of "diplomatic paralysis" in the face of the blitz launched by Gen. Musharraf.

# New Delhi remains cold to Russia, China strategic axis

BY GAUTAM DATT

**New Delhi, July 20:** India is cold to the proposal to form New Delhi-Moscow-Beijing strategic axis. The tripartite alignment has already been formally rejected by India and Russia. The proposal, which has been in circulation for last several years now, surfaced again last week when Chinese President Jiang Zemin visited Russia and signed a historic friendship treaty.

India and Russia have maintained that the relationship among the three countries were guided by separate bilateral interactions. Commenting on the Russia-China treaty, an Indian foreign ministry official said that it was a bilateral arrangement between the two sides. The official said that India has separate strong ties with both Russia and China.

The three sides — Russia, China and India — have cooperated with each other in international arenas

on several issues. The idea of India-Russia-China axis was first moved by former Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov when he visited New Delhi in December 1999. While there had been lot of media attention to the issue in Moscow, India had expressed its unwillingness to join such a formal arrangement. Beijing too has made informal references to the proposal on several occasions. Former Chinese ambassador to India Zhu Gong had talked about the need for Russia, China and India to seek common ground particularly on the issue of cross-border terrorism.

Moreover India has stressed that there was no need to go back to Cold War-like situation by formalising such an axis. Russia too has emphasised on the bilateral relations among the three nations. The issue no longer figures in the formal talks between India and Russia though it has been discussed time and again by the analysts of the

two nations. The idea of the axis was to bring together more than two billion people of three nuclear armed nations. Its basic aim was to challenge the US hegemony. But in today's context a new alignment seems to be taking place with India looking up to the US for cooperation and trying to get an entry into the "friends and allies" circle of the super power. New Delhi's endorsement of the US administration's nuclear missile defence system being the latest indication of the Indian drift towards Washington. Even when the idea of tripartite alignment was mooted, analysts had expected it to remain on paper as all the three nations have strong bilateral expectations with the US. Even as Beijing has fallen out with Washington, both Russia and India have important ties with the US. The relations between India and China too has witnessed roller coaster ride and has never remained stable for long time.

# BJP labels Jaswant Agra 'villain'

**FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN**

**New Delhi, July 20:** Foreign minister Jaswant Singh has apparently emerged as the BJP's fall guy for the Agra talks breakdown.

Party sources said the BJP national executive — which meets next weekend — will discuss the summit in detail, and the exercise may include an assessment of the foreign ministry's role.

Singh, never a favourite with the Sangh parivar, came under a cloud after the BJP got reports suggesting that he had made amendments in a draft of the aborted Agra agreement in his own hand. The draft, sent by Pakistan to be vetted by India, was re-

turned to Singh's counterpart Abdul Sattar with the changes.

"We are now almost certain that Pakistan will publicly exhibit the draft copy with Singh's handwritten changes as proof of our endorsement. It will also try and use this as the basis for all future talks," BJP sources said.

Though a foreign ministry spokesperson had said two days ago that the Agra talks would not be a benchmark for the future, the BJP fears Pakistan may show the document as "evidence" of India's ratification and use it to bolster its thesis that an "invisible hand" had been at work to scuttle the summit.

The BJP also voiced its disap-

proval of the foreign ministry's media "mismanagement". A team of party officials, headed by J.P. Mathur, called on A.B. Vajpayee this morning to share its views on the issue, but the Prime Minister did not respond. "It was an utter failure of the ministry of external affairs," BJP sources said. "The Pakistan foreign minister was in constant touch with the press but Jaswant Singh did not even try to brief the Indian press selectively. He was simply inaccessible."

Sources argued that Sushma Swaraj was being made a "scapegoat for no fault of hers". "Maybe, she was asked to give a limited briefing at a particular point and she did her job. Our information is

Pakistan's note-takers in the one-to-one sessions were in constant touch with their military spokesman. But no such effort was made by our MPA."

If Singh has fallen several notches in the summit scorecard, home minister L.K. Advani has come up trumps. The BJP office-bearers have sought an appointment to congratulate him for the summit's "success" as they did Vajpayee this morning. "We equally congratulate Advani because he is as much responsible for the summit's success as Vajpayee," sources said.

BJP sources claimed Advani's presence made "all the difference between success and failure". Sign- ing an agreement would have

amounted to failure in the BJP's view and, sources claimed, Advani was largely responsible for blocking it.

Asked what Advani's role was, sources said: "We gather he was the only one vigilant enough to spot the clause Pakistan had inserted in the final draft, which stated that the nine points in the agreement were conditioned by a forward movement on Jammu and Kashmir. Advani put his foot down on this and that was the end of the talks."

Sources stressed that while the decision to call off the negotiations was taken collectively by Vajpayee, Advani and Singh, it was the home minister who "must

have taken the lead".

A statement issued by the BJP recorded the party's "great appreciation of the determination and firmness with which the Prime Minister put forward the centrality of India's principal concerns, especially the one relating to cross-border terrorism. "We are happy that a clear message has gone to the entire world, and particularly to Pakistan, that India will not compromise on the question of cross-border terrorism and other anti-India activities."

Singling out aspects of the summit's "success", Mathur said: "We feel proud of the way the Prime Minister stood with dignified contempt towards Pakistan."

# Congress to take Govt. to task on summit

APD-11  
2/2  
By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JULY 20.** The Congress plans to ask some uncomfortable questions to the Government on the Agra summit. Though its representatives at the all-party meet on Thursday limited themselves to pointing out some obvious shortcomings, the party is now preparing to take the Government to task.

The Congress held a strategy session this evening for the monsoon session of Parliament starting on Monday. Present at the meeting were Mr. Madhav-rao Scindia, Dr. Manmohan Singh, Mr. Arjun Singh, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, Mr. Priyaranjan Dasmunshi, and the general secretaries, Mr. Kamalnath, Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad and the party spokesperson, Mr. Jaipal Reddy.

Although the Congress is unlikely to continue with the boycott of Parliament, it has shortlisted a host of issues on which it plans to haul the Government

over the coals. High priority is for the Agra summit. It wants the Prime Minister to give a detailed statement after which it will demand a detailed discussion. It will also raise the UTI fiasco, the Tehelka issue, and the rapidly deteriorating situation in Manipur, the Government's inaction on issuing a fresh notification on the Ayodhya imbroglio, the disinvestment of Air India and the telecom scam.

Separately, the Congress sought to press home the fillip provided by the results of the local bodies elections in Andhra Pradesh. It viewed the results as an indication of the unmistakable shift "in favour of the party". "It is the beginning of the end of the TDP in the State," said the party spokesperson, Mr. Jaipal Reddy.

Blaming the TDP Government of dividing the State, the Congress leaders were also unhappy that the BJP had also come a cropper in Andhra Pradesh, said Mr. Reddy.

THE HINDU

## Post-summit statements reflect Govt. confusion: CPI

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 20. The Communist Party of India (CPI) feels there is confusion in the Government in the post-Agra summit phase and charged that a negative atmosphere was being built up, especially from within the Sangh Parivar and the ruling National Democratic Alliance.

Contradictory statements were issued after the summit. While the Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Jaswant Singh, said that India would build further on the summit, the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson said since there was no agreement, New Delhi would have to depend on the Shimla and the Lahore accords the next time around.

Referring to these contradictions, the CPI general secretary, Mr. A.B. Bardhan, commented in the latest issue of party organ, *New Age* that "At the very least, it reflects the confusion that prevails at the Government level. It reflects the pressure from the hawks who have been active all through, and are now trying to capitalise on the inability to agree on a draft statement at Agra. A very negative atmosphere is being built up, especially from within the Sangh Parivar and the NDA itself. Many things are being said and written which are not germane to the issue. Motives are being questioned which can only cause bitterness."

The CPI warned that Pakistan was "more than willing to esca-

late tension" and attempting to use the media to project Islamabad's standpoint and observed that New Delhi's media management was a "total flop".

Mr. Bardhan said the Information and Broadcasting Minister, Mrs. Sushma Swaraj, did a "dis-service" to the talks, deliberate or not.

The party charged the Vajpayee Government with inadequate preparation ahead of the summit, while underlining the need for India to continue dialogue with Pakistan.

The party had been advocating talks even when the BJP-led government had maintained it would not hold parleys till cross-border terrorism was halted by Islamabad.

# India to go by Simla, Lahore accords

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 19. — After rejecting the draft Agra declaration, India today categorically stated that there was no question of "reneging" from the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration.

Even as it hoped that the dialogue would move forward with the twin objective of peace and goodwill, the government said that it cannot afford to ignore the previous agreements and experiences that India had to face in the past.

While emphasising that there would be no reneging from the two accords, the external affairs ministry spokesperson, Mrs Nirupama Rao, said: "We hope the dialogue will move forward. Our objective is peace and goodwill. But we cannot ignore the previous agreements and experiences of the past".

A day after taking a strong line, India seems to

have become soft suddenly. Replying to a question about India's stand that a new beginning had to be made on the basis of Shimla and Lahore accords on the ground that no agreement was concluded at the Vajpayee-Musharraf Agra summit, Mrs Rao said "Agra marked the beginning of a journey and commencement of a process. We are not discounting the relevance of the Agra meet". On New Delhi's proposal for a visit to Pakistan by the Director General of Military Operations, she said a response from Islamabad was awaited. "Our proposal stands".

On the Pakistani side, President Musharraf's visit was supported by small and groups of the 19-party Alliance for Restoration of Democracy. However, Mrs Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party and deposed Prime Minister, Mr Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League, both members of the 19-party alliance, opposed Musharraf's visit.

THE STATESMAN

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## 'Next round starts afresh'

Continued from Page 1

relations. However, India expressed happiness that Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf talked about New Delhi's desire for peace in the subcontinent after he returned to Pakistan. "We are happy that President Musharraf has carried the impression back to Pakistan that there is a great desire within India for the establishment of good neighbourly relations," the spokesperson said, adding that the caravan of peace will move ahead. The strong Indian reaction was a response to Pakistan's assertion that the threads for the next round would be picked from the draft joint declaration prepared in Agra. Pakistan foreign minister Abdul Sattar had claimed in a press conference on Tuesday that the Agra summit would be a "valuable foundation" for the two leaders for reaching a "full agreement" at a future meeting. It has been rejected outright by India. India and Pakistan had serious disagreements on the issues of cross-border terrorism and Kashmir respectively, which resulted in an inconclusive Agra dialogue. New Delhi has dismissed the draft declaration being emphasised by Pakistan.

New Delhi also launched a strong attack against Pakistan foreign minister Abdul Sattar, who had described cross-border terrorism as "cross-Line of Control terrorism." India said it was "astonished at the technicality voiced" by the Pakistan foreign minister. "We know very well that Pakistan understands perfectly what is meant by cross-border terrorism, which is inclusive of encouraging and abetting infiltration and terrorism across LoC," said the MEA spokesperson.

India, however, said the Agra summit had not been a total waste. Pakistan has maintained that the two sides were close to signing the Agra declaration.

## Next round starts afresh, not from Agra: MEA

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 18: India on Wednesday nullified the Agra summit, saying the basis of the next round of talks with Pakistan would be the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration. New Delhi made it clear that as "no closure was reached on the text of an agreement" in Agra, the two sides would have to begin afresh.

India's response came a day after external affairs minister Jaswant Singh had declared that the Agra summit was not a failure. "Various proposals were discussed (in the draft declaration) but it is self-evident that until such proposals receive closure and subscription by signature there is no agreement. We will, therefore, have to begin again," a MEA spokesperson said.

The MEA outlined the Shimla Agreement and Lahore Declaration as the "cornerstones" of Indo-Pak bilateral

Turn to Page 2

THE ASIAN AGE

# 'Govt didn't do homework before summit'

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, July 18

THE GOVERNMENT rushed into the Agra summit without any homework, said CPI(M) general secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet here today.

He also described the recent pronouncements by Pakistan Foreign Minister that the summit had not failed as part of a conspiracy.

Speaking at the condolence meeting of Left Front chairman Sailen Dasgupta at the Netaji Indoor Stadium, Surjeet said the summit bore out the Government's lack of preparation. "They agreed to meet the Pakistan President without any groundwork on which issues to be discussed and how far to go with them. I have never seen such a thing in my life."

He described Musharraf as a clever man who came close to getting what he wanted.

"He was ready to term Kashmir a 'issue' rather than a 'dispute', but refused to include a clause on cross-border terrorism. The talks broke down when the Indian side realised this."

Surjeet said his party had welcomed the talks and the Prime Minister's proposed visit to Pakistan. "But the Pakistan Foreign Minister's comment that the talks did not fail is part of a conspiracy — nothing but a ploy."

Alluding to reports in Pakistan's *Dawn* newspaper, Surjeet said the desire for peace is strong on both sides of the border and Indo-Pak dialogue should continue.

"When I met the PM before the summit, he told me he was not under any pressure to go into the talks. I told him I would tell you later under whose pressure you are working."

He wondered why Musharraf trusted Vajpayee so much.

Surjeet welcomed the recent Sino-Russia pact against USA's National Missile Defence policy.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

JUL 18 1997



# Pak officials brief journalists, MEA ignores Indian media

BY OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

AA 3 17/7

**Agra, July 16:** It was a war of nerves. The tension was unbelievable. Hundreds of journalists, gathered at the media centre kilometres away from the Jaypee Palace Hotel where the hard bargaining was taking place, could feel it. An agreement between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf was reached at 1.30 pm.

This broke down shortly after as the Indian side insisted that cross-border terrorism should find place in the document in so many words. The Pakistanis who had been consistent in their reluctance to include the phrase, then said that this could be accommodated if India was willing to add a clause linking this to the will of the people of Kashmir. It took hours for the two sides to break the stalemate. President Musharraf had to cancel his visit to Jaipur and Ajmer. Rumours that he might stay on for another day, or at least the night gathered strength. Finally at about 7.30 pm, the Pakistan foreign secretary Inamul Haq made a quick appearance and told the journalists from his country that the general would be leaving for Islamabad the same night. That he would not be extending his stay. And the Agra declaration as the joint statement was to be turned into would be signed before he left.

But again in the absence of a time frame the journal-

ists, by now cynical about the entire process, continued with the wild speculation. It was interesting to note that while officials from the Pakistan delegation did visit the media centre to exchange some information from their journalists, not a single official from the India found the time to make a similar appearance.

The result was that while the journalists from the neighbouring country were told that Kashmir was on top of the agenda, the Indian media was left completely in the dark. Any information available at the media centre was courtesy the visitors. Most noticeable was the MEA spokesperson Nirupama Rao, who did not show her face, except for a brief briefing on the first day, at the media centre. She remained away, leaving a clueless director and an OSD from the external affairs publicity wing to handle queries from the media. The stock answer of the two junior officials to any question was, "I do not know, I have no idea." The day began with a meeting between President Musharraf and a group of editors from the Indian media. It turned out to be a press conference with the proceedings being telecast later. The general used the occasion to spell out the agenda, which created a stir in the Indian camp which was taken by surprise at this public voicing of demands. In what appeared to be an exercise to get the Prime Minister's point of view across, the Indian side released the transcript of remarks Mr Vajpayee had made.

THE ASIAN AGE

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**'CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM IS OUR CORE CONCERN'**

# To Agra with optimism: Jaswant

By C. Raja Mohan

**NEW DELHI, JULY 12.** Despite its disappointment over the decision by the Pakistani President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, to meet Kashmiri dissidents during his visit, India today signalled a constructive approach to the talks this weekend in Agra.

Summing up the Indian position three days before Gen. Musharraf arrives here, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, sought to blow away the gathering cloud of gloom over the Agra summit in the last few days.

India was not going to let the acrimony of the last few days over the proposed meeting between Gen. Musharraf and the Hurriyat leaders derail its initiative to renew the engagement with Pakistan. "I am not at all pessimistic," Mr. Singh insisted at a crowded press conference this afternoon. He declared that the Government "will approach the Agra summit with optimism and a positive spirit".

At the same time Mr. Singh outlined a tough negotiating position on Jammu and Kashmir insisting that it was an integral part of India, rejecting ideas for self-determination for Kashmiris and third party mediation.

## Ready for better ties

The message from India today was one of realism. The Government was ready to move towards a different relationship with

Pakistan; but it was not going to give away the store on Kashmir.

To a direct question whether India was prepared to trust Gen. Musharraf, given his well-known role in engineering the Kargil confrontation two years ago, Mr. Singh refused to answer either "yes" or "no".

Expressing reluctance to pass judgment on Gen. Musharraf, the Minister said the Kargil experience was indeed part of India's history. But he proclaimed India's readiness to get over the bitterness of the past and make one more bid for "lasting peace and amity with Pakistan".

Questioned on Gen. Musharraf's attempt to make Kashmir the principal focus of the Agra summit, Mr. Singh said India had never "shied away" from discussing the subject and was prepared for a substantive discussion at Agra.

But Mr. Singh insisted that there were other issues in India-Pakistan relations as important as Kashmir which would figure in the Agra talks. The two countries, Mr. Singh said, "will hopefully address the totality of the relationship".

Mr. Singh, who currently holds the portfolios of External Affairs and Defence in the Cabinet, said India had a "core concern" of its own to be taken up with Gen. Musharraf — cross-border terrorism. The Government would address the issue "unambiguously" at Agra.

Asked about possible changes in the negotiating framework on Pakistan, Mr. Singh



answered in the negative. "India will continue to abide by the framework of the Composite Dialogue that was agreed to by the two countries nearly four years ago."

The Minister rejected the argument that India was negotiating with Pakistan either under pressure from the United States or weakened by the decade-long insurgency in the State.

He dismissed Pakistan's criticism that India's recent goodwill gestures to promote people-to-people contacts were "peripheral" to the central question of Jammu and Kashmir. "I cannot subscribe to the view

that people can ever be peripheral" in the relations between India and Pakistan, he said.

Elaborating on a broad range of issues in the bilateral relations, Mr. Singh said India was "disappointed" with Gen. Musharraf's decision to meet the Hurriyat leaders in New Delhi on Saturday at the reception to be hosted by the Pakistan High Commissioner.

Mr. Singh defended the decision by the ruling National Democratic Alliance to boycott the reception in honour of Gen. Musharraf. Representatives of the Government would be present on the occasion as part of the decision to "observe due protocol".

## CCS meets

UNI reports:

The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today held another informal meeting of the CCS to firm up the agenda for talks with Gen. Musharraf. The meeting, attended by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, and Mr. Singh and senior officials, discussed issues that are likely to be taken up during the summit.

The meeting, fourth in a row, also delib-erated on controversial statements made by Gen. Musharraf and his Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, on Kashmir and other issues.

More reports on Pages 13, 14 and 15

# Tea party: 'It is for parties to decide'

By Neena Vyas

**NEW DELHI, JULY 9.** There is a definite possibility of some political party leaders deciding to stay away from the Pakistan High Commissioner, Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi's "tea-party" here on July 14 where members of the Hurriyat Conference are also expected to be guests.

The subject came up at the all-party meeting convened by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, here today when the opposition party leaders as well as those of the ruling National Democratic Alliance coalition made known their strong opposition to "any role for the Hurriyat" during the coming India-Pakistan summit talks.

They sought from Mr. Vajpayee a clarification on the issue which has raised an unpleasant controversy ahead of the summit.

They were told the Government had already advised Pakistan not to invite the Hurriyat leaders for the "tea-party" to be hosted by the Pakistan High Commissioner.

But if they do invite the Hurriyat (the Hurriyat leaders today claimed they had received invitations for all their executive committee members), the Government suggested that party leaders would have to decide for themselves whether to attend it or not.

However, the Congress leader, Mr. Natwar Singh, later described this as a "non-issue" and a "red-herring." He said that he for one would attend the party.

"How can we decide who should or should not be invited by



**Leaders of various political parties at an all-party meeting on the coming Indo-Pak. summit convened by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, at his residence in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI**

Mr. Qazi? If a separate meeting had been organised between a Hurriyat delegation and the Pakistan President, that would have been objectionable."

The CPI(M) also felt that the issue was a non-issue. "Earlier the Union Government was even prepared to allow a Hurriyat delegation to visit Pakistan. So the talk of a boycott (of Mr. Qazi's tea-party) is incorrect," the party politburo stated afterwards.

But, Mr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra, BJP representative at today's meeting, said his party would stay away to register its strong protest against any invitation to the Hur-

riyat. In fact, it was Mr. Malhotra's suggestion that perhaps party leaders consult among themselves and jointly decide to boycott the "tea-party".

Several party leaders felt that they would have to think about attending Mr. Qazi's party for they see the invitation to the Hurriyat as an unnecessary irritation and unstatesmanlike gimmick by Pakistan.

As for the Government, it made it known that having let Pakistan know its disapproval of an invitation to the Hurriyat, it would not violate the protocol. This would mean that the Government would

be represented at the High Commissioner's party.

Briefing newsmen later, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, said: "the Hurriyat has no legitimacy, no locus standi. They are Indian nationals and can contest elections. If they win, they do acquire some legitimacy.

"We think any invitation to them would be wrong. We still hope that wisdom would dawn on Pakistan. The summit is between Mr. Vajpayee and the Pakistan President, General Pervez Musharraf, not the Hurriyat. The focus of the summit should not be lost".

# US has no role in summit: Jaswant assures Opposition

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 9

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee today fielded External Affairs and Defence Minister Jaswant Singh to assure the Opposition that India would not make any concession to Pakistan on cutting down troops in Jammu and Kashmir or rush into a no-war pact if it did not envisage an end to cross-border terrorism.

Singh told the all-party meeting at Vajpayee's home that contrary to popular perception, the US did not have a "direct or indirect role" in the summit. He ruled out India agreeing to any proposal from Pakistan to reduce Indian troops in Jammu and Kashmir.

"This is not an issue to be discussed with Pakistan or with any third country... The determination of number of Indian troops in Jammu and Kashmir is the sovereign right of the Government of India," Singh said.

"No country has the right to suggest or decide the number of Indian troops, which is related to the situation in the State in the context of cross-border terrorism," he said.

Singh said any offer of no-war pact from Pakistan would make sense only if it covers different forms of proxy war, namely cross-border terrorism. "In our opinion, a no-war-pact is meaningful only if there is an undertaking to end all forms of

## ATAL TO HAVE SEPARATE TALKS WITH OPP PARTIES

TODAY'S ALL-PARTY meeting chaired by Prime Minister A B Vajpayee was only the first of his scheduled interactions with the Opposition leaders on his summit with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf.

Vajpayee is to hold separate meetings with the leaders of the Congress, Samajwadi Party, CPI(M) and the CPI before his summit with Musharraf at Agra from June 14 to 16.

Pramod Mahajan said the Congress had sought a separate meeting with Vajpayee to discuss the summit.

HTC, New Delhi

proxy war, which has been witnessed in the region. Aiding and abetting terrorism is a major issue before us."

Asked whether India plans to raise the issue of "nuclear confidence building measures", Singh said: "India is keen raise the issue since it is the first meeting between the leaders of the two countries after the nuclear tests in 1998."

**CPI-ML objection:** The CPI-ML (Liberation) has taken objection to its exclusion in today's all-party meeting convened by the Prime Minister. "It is amazingly unfortunate," the party said.

# Spell out stand on Hurriyat, Opp tells Govt

9-f-Punjab  
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9/7

HT Correspondents & PTI  
New Delhi, July 8

THE OPPOSITION urged the Government to clarify its stand on the Hurriyat's role in the Indo-Pak summit, on a day that the state radio in Islamabad confirmed that Hurriyat leaders had been invited to meet General Pervez Musharraf at the Pakistan High Commission reception.

The Prime Minister has invited 35 political leaders across the spectrum to a meeting tomorrow to discuss the impending summit. However, the mood of the Opposition parties today indicated that Atal Bihari Vajpayee will have a lot of explaining to do.

As the leading Opposition party, the Congress cautioned the Government against Pakistan's insistence on involving the Hurriyat in Indo-Pak talks. At least three Congress leaders reacted to the emerging situation, though they stressed the need to create a conducive atmosphere for talks.

Party spokesman Anand Sharma found it "most unfortunate" that Pakistan should accuse Indian forces of "repression" in Jammu and Kashmir.

His senior colleague, Natwar Singh, urged Pakistan to exercise verbal restraint and act with a sense of responsibility since there was so much at stake. Congress general secretary Ambika Soni recalled out that her party had consistently called for a dialogue with Pakistan.

The Samajwadi Party leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav, lashed out at the Government for the delay in consulting political par-

ties and the lack of transparency in its responses.

The Pakistani President, he said, was more forthcoming about the summit, deploring the "hush hush" manner in which he said the Vajpayee government was approaching the July 15 meeting.

Yadav, who today met a delegation of Panun Kashmir leaders, also intended to raise the issue of the plight of the Kashmiri pandits and their demands for an annual pilgrimage to the Sharadapeeth in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Most displaced Kashmiris are BJP supporters.

The Left parties said the Government had not done "enough ground work" for the summit. The BJP's ally, the Samata Party, cautioned the Government against agreeing to any Pakistani proposal for withdrawal of troops from Kargil and Siachen.

The BJP itself took strong exception to President Musharraf's invitation to Hurriyat leaders to attend a reception. The Pakistani move, BJP chief Jana Krishnamurthy said, did not send the right message and could have been avoided.

However, Krishnamurthy as well as other BJP leaders like Madan Lal Khurana stressed that the summit should be considered a success if it paved the way for regular contact between the two countries or led to trade or cultural agreements.

Khurana said Vajpayee would not make any compromise that would violate the integrity of Jammu and Kashmir.

Related reports on Page 9

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 JUL 1997

# Meet with Hurriyat not welcome

## Atal wants nuke issues on table

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 6 JULY

**T**HE HURRIYAT issue has now affected the very atmosphere of the Vajpayee-Musharraf summit with both India and Pakistan adopting harsh positions.

India on Friday night sent in a strongly worded diplomatic message to Pakistan about its deep objections to Pervez Musharraf meeting the Hurriyat in Delhi. In a sharp reaction, Pakistan lashed out at what it called Indian "atrocities" in Kashmir.

Friday's exchanges has added to fears regarding the possible success of the summit in Agra on the 15th. The statements were only a confirmation of the poisoned atmosphere that had dimmed the prospects of the summit.

Pakistan's statements also came in the wake of an Indian statement that "violence continues to be fomented in Jammu & Kashmir from beyond our borders. This must cease."

The Indian objections to the proposed meeting was conveyed to the highest level in the foreign office, making it the second time that India has formally communicated its objections. Pakistan had agreed to abide by India's sentiments, but clearly domestic pressure caused a turnaround.

After saying that Pakistan would invite the Hurriyat to the high commissioner's tea-party, the Pakistan foreign office issued a statement condemning what it said was a recent sharp increase in abuse of civilians, including women, by Indian forces in Kashmir.

The statement said there had been a "recent sharp increase in incidents of rape and molestation of women". "Indian forces have also resorted to unprovoked firing at demonstrators protesting against official connivance at these criminal acts," it said.

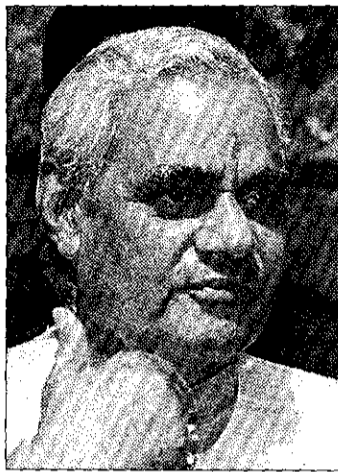
Pakistan said: "Despite warnings from global human rights groups, India forcibly uses civilians, including minors, for detection of mines in occupied Kashmir in flagrant violation of international humanitarian norms."

Indrani Bagchi  
NEW DELHI 6 JULY

**ANNOUNCING** A second set of proactive confidence building measures (CBMs) to strengthen the ceasefire on the LoC, India once again widened the canvas for the India-Pakistan dialogue beyond Kashmir.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee announced that director general of military operations (DGMO) Lt Gen G.S. Sihota would soon travel to Pakistan to "strengthen and stabilise" peace along the LoC and the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL). Recalling a bilateral commitment made in Lahore on nuclear CBMs, Mr Vajpayee also proposed setting up of an official expert level dialogue between India and Pakistan.

India's move is designed to find favour with an international community sitting on the razor's edge about the lack of nuclear



**Vajpayee: High on peace**

safety and risk-reduction dialogues between India and Pakistan. The US has been pushing both countries to work on reducing the dangers of unauthorised or accidental nuclear war.

Therefore, Pakistan's holding the nuclear issue hostage to Kashmir will seem churlish by any standards, and international pressure, if any, will be focused on Pakistan, since it is the prospect of capricious nukes that has the world on edge.

Notwithstanding Gen Musharraf's single-point agenda of meeting the Hurriyat when he arrives here for a summit, India's moves are evidence that India, at least, wants to move beyond this.

This is probably the reason why the Pakistan foreign office has been unusually quiet about India's measures, the spokesman even refraining from responding to questions on the subject.

Besides, by discussing nuclear CBMs, India is also putting the Lahore Declaration back on the table. Pervez Musharraf's dislike of the Lahore and Shimla Agreement is well-known, but as a result of

## 'Guest should respect host's se

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 6 JULY

**UNION HOME** minister L.K Advani, on Friday, asked Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf not to be unmindful of the Indian sentiments by insisting on meeting the Hurriyat leaders during his stay in New Delhi on July 14.

"The guests should not disregard the sentiments of the hosts," was how Mr Advani put his views across at a function organised here on Friday evening to celebrate the birth centenary of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh founder, Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee.

Although he did not say it in so many words, the message to Pakistan was loud and clear. It indicated a hardening of stance on the part of the Vajpayee government as it found the invitation extended by Gen. Musharraf to

the APHC objectionable.

Analysts observing the run-up to the summit cautioned against viewing Mr Advani's remarks as reflective of a hawkish posture. Highly-placed sources in the government said the Union home minister had discussed the latest developments at length with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, and that the latter also thoroughly disapproved the General's action.

The Prime Minister, it is learnt, was left under no illusion that, as a result of the pre-summit manoeuvres by Pakistan, the atmosphere had become very vitiated and that it will be futile to expect the summit to achieve anything tangible.

It is also believed by the Indian circles that the Pakistani President's invitation for the tea-party to be hosted by him in the



**Musharraf: Firm about it**

Indian Capital may not finally have the Hurriyat leaders in the guest-list. The idea, they point out, may have been limited to restoring the sagging credibility of the Hurriyat conference and to convey

# e, India tells Pak ks agenda

Friday's initiative, there is little chance that the MoU, signed in 1999, cannot be resurrected.

On the LoC, India's move is intended to formalise the ceasefire, which has been the only measure of success of the non-initiation of combat operations (Nico) initiative by the Indian government. Once again, the Lahore Declaration enjoined on both countries to undertake CBMs and "undertake consultative mechanisms".

This would include expanding the current hotline links between the two DGMOs to include air and navy as well, sector level communications and even joint monitoring or patrolling of the border.

Beyond NJ9842 northwards, where India occupies the heights of the Saltoro range on the Siachen Glacier, the AGPL has been the bone of contention between India and Pakistan since 1984.

## ntiments'

a message to the separatists that Pakistan remained steadfast to their sentiments.

Be that as it may, Pakistan's insistence on General Musharraf meeting the Hurriyat here has left a bitter taste in the mouth in New Delhi, with senior government sources labelling Musharraf's action "graceless", and "lacking in courtesy to the host."

Senior government sources on Friday insisted that notwithstanding Musharraf's harping on the Hurriyat issue, India was resolute in not allowing any space at all to the Hurriyat in the Indo-Pak summit or on any subsequent dialogue in Kashmir.

"That is non-negotiable," they pointed out.

India's official position too hardened, and the foreign office avoided from calling it a "non-issue" to an "extraneous" one.

## Benazir warns of backlash after Agra summit

New Delhi

6 JULY



**Be-nazir** FORMER PAK-ISTANI premier Benazir Bhutto said India was making a "colossal mistake" if it believed that President Pervez Musharraf was going to play peace card at the Agra summit and warned of a "backlash" after it as he lacked mandate to represent the country.

"This entire visit is geared to take pressure off Afghanistan," Ms Bhutto told Karan Thapar on BBC's Hardtalk Pakistan programme. Ms Bhutto, who is in exile in London, said "New Delhi is making a colossal mistake if it believed that General Musharraf is going to play a peace card to sustain himself in power."

She said when Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee undertook the Lahore initiative in February 1999, there was a backlash. "Musharraf can go to New Delhi but there will be a backlash," the former premier said. Cautioning India that any agreement reached during the summit would be "with a dictator," Ms Bhutto said Musharraf lacked the mandate to represent the country.

The 48-year-old Ms Bhutto said even the Pakistan army could turn around tomorrow and content that Musharraf was a retired man and he had no mandate. "Key elements within our population will say that too," she said.

Stating that Musharraf's visit to India was a "tactical move" by him, Ms Bhutto said army generals in power in Pakistan were under pressure on two counts, one being sanctions against Afghanistan. The other, she said, was to give an impression of "good guys" to the global community to stick to power. — PTI

# Talks under US pressure: Mulayam

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

PATNA, July 5. - The Vajpayee-Musharraf summit was taking place "under pressure from USA," the Samajwadi Party chief, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, said here today.

When pointed out that General Musharraf had denied American pressure behind the summit, Mr Yadav said: "The denial too has been issued under the American pressure."

Mr Yadav told reporters that the Samajwadi Party was opposed to any third party intervention on the Kashmir issue. "The issue should be settled through the talks strictly between India and Pakistan," he added.

But he said: "If any third party bridges the gap between India and Pakistan it is welcome."

The SP supremo re-iterated his allegation that

Mr Laloo Yadav put a spanner "in my way of becoming the Prime Minister in 1996. Mr Laloo Yadav had admitted it at a rally in Patna."

Asked about Mr Laloo Yadav's refusal to join the third front, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav said: "We had asked Mr Laloo Yadav to snap ties with the Congress and to join the Front. We have said only those who maintain equidistance from the Congress and the BJP can join the front."

## Sikhs' plea on Nanak birthplace

The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee today demanded that the Prime Minister take up with Gen Pervez Musharraf the issue of declaring Nankana Sahib, the birth place of Guru Nanak Dev, a holy city on the line of Vatican, adds PTI from New Delhi.

THE STATESMAN

10 JUL 2001



# Musharraf ready to give peace with India a shot

**Focus to be on Kashmir, but Pak will discuss other issues too** *Self-confidence must not be misconstrued as weakness: PM*

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Pakistan's chief executive General Pervez Musharraf has accepted Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's invitation to visit India. The letter of acceptance was handed over to foreign secretary Chokila Iyer by Pakistan's high commissioner Ashraf Jehangir Qazi on Tuesday.

"I accept your invitation to me and my wife to visit India with great pleasure," Gen Musharraf said in his reply to the Prime Minister. Echoing Mr Vajpayee's call to walk the high road of peace, Gen Musharraf wrote, "Pakistan has always sought to establish a tension-free and cooperative relationship with India so that our people are able to devote their resources and energies to the task of economic and social development."

Welcoming General Musharraf's acceptance of India's invitation, an external affairs ministry spokesman said the dates would be finalised after mutual consultations. In an interview to BBC, the Pakistani leader had said the talks would be held by June-end or early July.

Unlike Mr Vajpayee's invitation letter, the tone of which was that of an elder statesman with a vision of peace, the General's letter was in keeping with the down-to-earth and practical reply of a man in uniform. It is as warm as a Pakistani general can be. At places though, he has tried to match Mr Vajpayee, an instance being, "At the beginning of the new century, our two countries must do their utmost to overcome the legacy of distrust and hostility in order to build a brighter future for our people. We wish to see a stable and prosperous India at peace with its neighbours."

However, there is a slight dig here. The general says he wants to see India at peace with its neighbours, which means that New Delhi has had problems not just with Pakistan but all its neighbours. But with an eye on hard-line domestic opinion, the general has also put Pakistan's case in a nutshell, saying, "The root cause of tension between our two countries is the unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute. I therefore look forward

to sincere and candid discussions with you to resolve the issue of Kashmir in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people. We are ready to discuss all other outstanding issues between our two countries as well." This has been Pakistan's position consistently. Kashmir remains the core issue, but Pakistan is ready to discuss all other issues as well.



A.B. Vajpayee

MANALI: Terming his invitation to Pakistan's chief executive General Pervez Musharraf as a "well-thought out" initiative towards achieving peace, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Tuesday asserted that the move was a demonstration of India's self-confidence and should not be construed as India's weakness.

"The invitation for talks should not be considered as weakness but a demonstration of India's self-confidence," Mr Vajpayee told reporters. On Pakistan's demand that Hurriyat Conference leaders should be allowed to meet General Musharraf during his visit, the Prime Minister said representatives of the conglomerate should first talk to the Centre's interlocutor, K.C. Pant. "Hurriyat leaders were released from jail to enable them to talk to the Indian government. Mr Pant is in Jammu and Kashmir for talks with various groups and they should come forward for parleys with him," he said, adding, "Doosron ki bari haad mein aayegi" (Others will get their turn later).

Claiming that he had taken major opposition parties into confidence on his move, Mr Vajpayee said his invitation to General Musharraf was a new initiative. The Prime Minister, whose week-long holiday at Prini will end on Wednesday, drove six km to the Mountaineering Training Institute here to meet mediapersons. The rest seems to have done him a world of good, for he looked relaxed and cheerful while answering questions on a variety of subjects.

Mr Vajpayee stated that New Delhi had always favoured a political solution to the Kashmir issue as it did not consider it a religious matter. Recalling that General Musharraf had stated on several occasions that he was prepared to talk to India at any time, in any place and at any level, the Prime Minister said other countries were also in favour of India and Pakistan resuming discussions.

On the government's decision to end the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir, he said it was done in order to improve the environment in the Valley as the

truce had not yielded the expected results.

Speaking about the Indian political scene, Mr Vajpayee denied reports about the possibility of Trinamul Congress chief Mamata Banerjee rejoining the NDA. He also said that he would fill up the vacancies in his cabinet before the monsoon session of parliament. (PTI)

## 'I'd like to visit my old home in Delhi'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's chief executive General Pervez Musharraf would like to visit his old home in Delhi if he gets an opportunity to do so.

"I would like to—if afforded the opportunity. It is not a primary issue, but if I get an opportunity, I would like to go and see it," the General said when asked in a BBC interview whether he would like to look up his old home in Delhi. General Musharraf said he does not have many memories of his stay in Delhi, where he was born, since he was too young at the time. (PTI)



Gen Musharraf

# Indo-Bangla JWG session from July 2

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 22: The first meeting of the Indo-Bangladesh joint boundary working groups will be held in Dhaka between July 2 and 4.

The two sides had finalised the terms and reference of the groups during official-level talks in New Delhi on June 12-13. The JBWGs have been asked to complete their work and submit a final report to their respective foreign secretaries by April 2002.

The two working groups will speed up work on demarcating the 6.5-km border and will also address the issue of enclaves and territories in adverse possession.

The Indian delegation will be led by external affairs joint secretary Meera Shankar and Bangladesh will be represented by joint secretary in the home ministry Jainul Huq.

The dates for the talks were proposed by Dhaka which were accepted by New Delhi. The recent engagements between India and Bangladesh are aimed at drawing a road map for a speedy solution to the three-decade-old border dispute.

The India-Bangladesh border flared up in April when the worst ever border clashes were witnessed resulting in the ghastly killing of 16 Border Security Force Personnel.

In the first round of talks held in New Delhi, the two sides had acknowledged that out of the around 4,000-km boundary only around 6.5 km needs to be demarcated. The officials had also agreed to maintain status quo.

Both sides have selected the teams drawn from various departments for the talks.

The main issue of discussion will be pending matters relating to the 1974 land and boundary agreement between the two nations. The two sides had set up two joint working groups — one to address the issue of demarcation of the remaining 6.5 km of the over 4,000-km India-Bangladesh border and the other to deal with the question of adverse side — in December last year when Bangladesh foreign secretary C.M. Shaif Sami had visited India. As per claims made by New Delhi, there are 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and 51 Bangladeshi enclaves in the Indian territory.

# India, China experts to meet over border issue

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 22: India and China will take a step forward towards resolving the complex border issue when expert groups from both sides meet in New Delhi on June 28.

The India-China experts group on border issues would hold its ninth meeting to speed up the process of clarifying the Line of Actual Control. The two sides had exchanged maps of the middle sector at the last meeting which took place in Beijing in November last year.

"The meeting will continue the process of clarification of the Line of Actual Control in the middle sector," a spokesperson of the ministry of external affairs said. The decision to exchange maps followed an understanding to accelerate the process of clarification of the over 4,000-km long boundary.

The expert groups, comprising senior officials of the ministries of defence and external affairs, were established after the two countries signed an agreement in 1993 to maintain peace and tranquillity along the border during then Prime Minister

P.V. Narasimha Rao's China visit.

The two sides have stressed on the need to speed up the exercise. During a meeting between external affairs minister Jaswant Singh and Chinese foreign minister Tang Jiaxuan in New Delhi in July last year both sides had decided to first delineate the less disputed middle sector. The middle sector is a small area of around 500 km along Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal.

Unlike the India-Pakistan Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, which has been delineated, there is no agreement between India and China on the LAC alignment. It is believed that the clarification of the LAC is the first key step towards a resolution of the vexed Sino-Indian boundary dispute which has impaired bilateral relations to a large extent.

"The early clarification of the LAC will allow the two nations to implement the agreements of 1993 and 1996 to maintain peace and tranquillity along the India-China border," an official source said. The Indian side was represented by officials from the ministry of external affairs and the ministry of defence.

THE ASIAN AGE

# President congratulates Musharraf



Soldiers take rest in Srinagar on Thursday after a night-long operation against Lashkar militants.

Udayan Namboodiri  
New Delhi, June 21

INDIA TODAY became the first country to officially congratulate General Pervez Musharraf on appointing himself President of Pakistan. Late this evening, President K R Narayanan sent a letter to Musharraf extending his best wishes and hoping his visit next month will improve ties between the two countries.

New Delhi's step is expected to help Musharraf scrape some credibility for himself when he is threatened with international isolation.

The Commonwealth, Britain and the United States have attacked Musharraf for making himself President, abolishing elected provincial assemblies and not announcing a clear roadmap for return to democracy.

India had sent a clear diplomatic message of its support for Musharraf's ascendancy as President yesterday when it asked its acting high commissioner Sudhir Vyas to attend Musharraf's swearing-in ceremony.

That New Delhi had advance information about Musharraf's intentions is clear from the contents of the telephonic discus-

## 'Musharraf move can be challenged in SC'

TWO FORMER Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of Pakistan have termed the elevation of Gen Pervez Musharraf to the President's office as an extra-constitutional act challengeable before the Supreme Court.

The two chief justices said courts could declare this elevation as unconstitutional if political parties challenge the military Government's move.

But they were of the view that the incumbent Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Justice Irshad Hasan Khan has himself acted extra constitutionally by administering the oath of Gen Musharraf.

HTC, Islamabad

sion Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had yesterday morning with Musharraf.

Around 10.30 am, Vajpayee called up Musharraf ostensibly to thank him for the good wishes he had communicated to him on the eve of his knee-replacement surgery.

## Lashkar top gun shot dead in encounter

HT Correspondent  
Srinagar, June 21

SECURITY FORCES gunned down the chief commander of Lashkar-e-Tayyeba and a senior associate in Budgam district late on Wednesday night.

Officials said Rashtriya Rifles troops laid siege to a house at Gopalpora (Wathora) in Chadoora belt of central Kashmir. When the forces and a special operation group (SOG) zeroed in on the house, the militants started firing.

Acting on a tip-off, the troops had cordoned off a few suspected houses in the village last evening. Even as the cordon was being laid, militants hiding inside one of the houses started firing. They were armed with AK-47 rifles and grenades.

One of the grenades exploded near a posse of securitymen, injuring five of them, including a major. Troops retaliated and a fierce encounter followed.

Authorities summoned a reinforcement of troops. Security forces destroyed the mili-

tant hideout after a gunbattle that lasted three hours.

Two bodies were recovered from the debris of the house. The dead were identified as Omer Abdullah Makki and Mohd Asghar alias Abu Anas, Pakistani cadres of the Lashkar.

Budgam SP Sunil Dutt said Makki was the operation chief and Asghar the district commander for Budgam. The owner of the house, where the militants were hiding, and his daughter were taken into custody by the SOG.

"This is a major success for security forces as it has led to a total void in hierarchy of let and is a big blow to their operations in the Valley," a defence spokesperson said.

Makki is the second Lashkar operation chief to be killed by security forces in the last two months. In April, a special operation group killed Lashkar chief Salahuddin. Security forces also shot dead the Lashkar's fidayeen commander at Buchpora on the outskirts of Srinagar early this month.

# India asks Iran to ensure safety of diplomatic staff

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 18: India on Monday asked the Iranian government to ensure the safety of its diplomatic staff in the Zahidan province bordering Pakistan where a blast ripped apart the Indian consulate complex on Thursday night.

A spokesperson for the Indian foreign office said that India had got in touch with the Iranian authorities to ensure the safety of the staff and property of the Indian consulate.

"We are in touch with the Iranian government and urged them to ensure security of the consulate staff. They are investigating the matter," the spokesperson for the ministry of external affairs said.

The blast took place in the Zahidan consulate on Thursday.

The Indian officials said that no one was injured in the explosion but there was damage to the property.

The walls and furniture of the consulate office were damaged. Officials said that consulate in Zahidan, headed by Mr V.K. Mahajan, was small and had a staff

only four to five persons.

The consulate staff escaped unhurt as the explosion took place in the evening, officials were reported to have said.

Asked whether the Pakistanis were involved in the blast, the spokesperson said the matter is still under investigation.

Zahidan is located next to the Iran-Pakistan border in Southeast Iran. Officials said that a number of Sikh families live in the city.

Meanwhile, the Indian government is tight-lipped about the explosion and are waiting for the investigation reports from the Iranian authorities.

The explosion comes in the wake of unearthing of a plot hatched by Osama Bin Laden to blow up the US embassy in New Delhi. The officials, however, said that it was too early to link the two incidents.

Recently, the relations between India and Iran have been on an upswing. The two nations have denounced the Taliban regime for promoting international terrorism while Iran has condemned the Taliban for issuing dictats against non-Muslims.

THE ASIAN AGE

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# 'J&K an integral part of India' Jaswant views not personal, says MIEA

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 16. — Mr Jaswant Singh's statement that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India was not merely "his personal view", but a reiteration of "the provisions of the Constitution of India," the foreign ministry spokesperson, Mrs Nirupama Rao, said today.

She was reacting to Gen Pervez Musharraf's comment that the external affairs minister's statement was "just a view and not a position". The Pakistan Chief Executive, during *Face the Nation* programme on Pakistan TV last night, had regretted Mr Singh's comment and hoped that India would not take that stand at the summit.

On India's intended stand on the dialogue, Mrs Rao said: "Our approach is defined by realism, and we've the high road to walk together."

On Gen Musharraf's comment that he would come to India with an "open mind", she said: "How can we gauge how open a mind is until it is opened?" The Chief Executive had iterated that Kashmir was the "core issue" between the two countries and hoped the summit would focus on it and not on other issues.

**Counter-insurgent killed:** Chairman of the J&K People's Patriotic Front and a top counter-insurgent, Nabi Azad, was shot dead by Hizbul

Mujahideen near his Shelipora camp, Anantnag district, this afternoon, UNI reports from Srinagar.

Fifteen militants, mostly foreigners, were among 19 people killed, and seven ultras were arrested in the past 24 hours. Among the slain ultras, three were Lashkar-e-Taiyaba men who were killed in an encounter at Bandipora, north Kashmir, late last night.

Three rifles, a rocket launcher, 20 grenades, a 60 mm bomb and a wireless set were found on them. A child was injured in a mine blast at Kernah, northern sector, last evening.

Officials said Azad was shot in front of his heavily guarded camp around 12.45 p.m. He died on way to hospital. The militants managed to escape before his guards could

retaliate. Pro-Pakistani Hizbul Mujahideen has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Azad was the first person to form a counter-insurgent group Muslim Mujahideen in south Kashmir. Trained as a militant, he was associated with the Hizbul till 1994 when he had surrendered and started working with the security forces against the militants. The Muslim Mujahideen was responsible for eliminating several top militants in south Kashmir.

Azad unsuccessfully contested Parliament and Assembly polls from Anantnag.

17/6  
9-8 PM  
5/1

■ Editorial: History lesson, page 8  
■ More reports on pages 10 & 12

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## INDIA'S ENERGY DIPLOMACY

15/6

INDIA'S POLITICAL SIGNAL to the Iranian authorities about a shift in its energy diplomacy concerning Pakistan may have prepared the ground for a quicker finalisation of an important gas pipeline project that Teheran and New Delhi had already agreed upon in principle. The project will entail the supplies of huge quantities of Iranian natural gas to meet India's energy hunger. Outwardly, the most economical way of linking Iran with India for this purpose is to lay a land-based pipeline through Pakistan. With India now dropping its objections to importing Iranian gas through Pakistani territory, the project can be designed accordingly. Yet, even as the officials of India and Iran have agreed at their latest meeting in New Delhi to commission a detailed project report for the on-land pipeline configuration, the two sides have also kept alive the alternative proposal of an under-sea link that would skirt the territorial waters of Pakistan. However, it appears that the separate proposals for the on-land route and the under-sea connection would be evaluated entirely on the basis of economic considerations in a normative fashion. New Delhi's concerns about the safety of a proposed pipeline across Pakistan have until recently centred entirely on unmitigated doubts over Islamabad's commitment to guarantee the uninterrupted passage of gas supplies to India. The deep and historical mistrust between India and Pakistan was the obvious foul factor.

In a larger diplomatic ambience, New Delhi's decision to soften its stand on Islamabad should add a friendly note to the bilateral mood ahead of the prospective summit between the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and Pakistan's Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf. However, New Delhi's move is not directly linked to the planned summit at all. The Vajpayee administration has sought to wriggle out of the Pakistan puzzle by persuading Iran to treat the pipeline

project as an exclusive bilateral matter between Teheran and New Delhi. The idea is that Iran, in its status as the gas exporter, will undertake to render assured supplies to India, the importer, without New Delhi having to get involved in matters concerning the safety and integrity of the pipeline. It will now be Iran's outlook to interact suitably with Pakistan if an on-land route, which will likely fall under Islamabad's jurisdiction, is finally chosen. Islamabad, which will stand to gain in prestige and transit fee in this scenario, has all along maintained that Pakistan can be counted upon to play fair in regard to an international project.

Now, irrespective of the political complexion of the final choice of a pipeline's pathway in several months' time, the latest understanding between New Delhi and Teheran should open the way for some new possibilities in economic diplomacy involving Pakistan as also India and Iran. A common market involving the three is not an idea being peddled at this time. Yet, the India-Iran equation, now based on a congruence of interests as identified during Mr. Vajpayee's recent visit to Teheran, can be free of a potential political irritant of the India-Pakistan genre arising out of a commercial deal. This still leaves India and Iran without a shared world view, although the two are deeply apprehensive about the regional reach of Afghanistan's Taliban and its suspected access to Pakistan for sustenance. In this sense, there is more to India-Iran ties than the new practice of energy diplomacy. Teheran, still sought to be held by the U.S. at an arm's length, is obviously keen to enhance cooperation with India in exploring the possibilities for a multipolar global political order. New Delhi, on the other hand, will be keen that Iran plays an India-friendly role in the Islamic arena of inter-state politics. It remains to be seen whether India's energy diplomacy will have any positive impact on the Islamic world.

THE HINDU

CPI(M) condemns  
aggression on  
Palestine

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 7. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) today strongly condemned 'increasing' Israeli acts of aggression on Palestine territories and asked the Vajpayee Government to uphold the traditional consensus of India's support to the Palestine cause.

In a statement issued here, the CPI-M politburo said the Government of Israel had declared all Palestine territories closed military areas preventing any entry or exit. "This effectively seals all Palestine contact with the outside world," the party said.

THE HINDU

## Jaswant Singh arrives in Moscow

**Moscow, JUNE 3** The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, arrived here today on a four-day visit to discuss closer military cooperation with Moscow. Mr. Singh, who also holds the Defence portfolio, is scheduled to co-chair the first session of Indo-Russian joint commission on military cooperation during his stay here.

From Russian side, the Vice Premier, Mr. Ilya Klebanov, will Co-chair the joint commission.

The commission was set up in October last year in New Delhi at a summit between the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin and the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee. Mr. Singh is scheduled to hold talks with the Russian Defence Minister, Mr. Sergei Ivanov and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Igor Ivanov on key international issues including the situation in West Asia and India's stand on the U.S. national missile defence plans. — PTI

## 'PM may consult Opposition before talks'

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 3.** The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, may hold discussions with the leaders of the major Opposition parties to elicit their views before meeting the Pakistani Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

The Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, said this in an interview to Star News tonight.

"If the talks are a right step, let us discuss together what we should discuss, and if he (the Prime Minister) thinks fit, he can talk with Opposition leaders before he meets the Pakistan military chief," he said. — PTI

THE HINDU

6 JUN 2001



# No change in views for summit: Jaswant

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 28. - India's position on fundamentals, such as the place of Kashmir in the nation and Pakistan's role in terrorism, remained unaltered today despite the overture for summit level talks on core issues with Pakistan.

"We are not in a game of defining the bottomline. The Prime Minister's letter is self-explanatory. We are ready to speak to Pakistan with open arms," external affairs and defence minister Jaswant Singh told a packed-to-capacity press conference here.

It was for Pakistan to define what it wants for a long-term relationship he said, in what is seen as an indication that India was not about to follow Pakistan in talking of conditions or expectations before the expected visit of General Pervez Musharraf.

In a foretaste of the diplomatic wordplay ahead of the summit, Mr Singh said the government intends to address the issue with "realism". Since it is a long road, the two nations have to walk together with the best of intentions to demonstrate their moves with "perseverance of peace rather than impatience".

On being asked pointedly what made India, which always has been demanding of Pakistan to create a conducive atmosphere for a dialogue, decide to call off the ceasefire and invite Musharraf at the same time, Mr Singh's reply was: "The event was the atmosphere".

He contended that India's peace initiative started in 1999 and not after the implementation of Non-initiation of combat operation, as the unilateral ceasefire declared ahead of

Ramzan last year was officially termed.

On calling it off, he said, the terrorist organisations were given a sufficient six months to recognise the imperatives of peace, dialogue and cooperation to shun violence but they did not. "Therefore that phase is over."

He said there are two tracks on which the government was working.

Terrorism would be handled as an internal affair which the State and the union home ministry would address firmly as part of track one. In track two, the international affair would be addressed, which involves a dialogue with Pakistan.

As part of preparatory moves, the foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan will meet on the sidelines of the SAARC meeting next month in Colombo.

India began preparing for General Musharraf's visit much before the invitation was extended, Mr Singh said. Other aspects are to be attended to. As for the visit, he said, it would depend on the "convenience of the calendar of both the governments".

He described as a "non-issue" the demand from Pakistan for the All Party Hurriyat Conference to be involved in the dialogue.

"Musharraf's visit is at the invitation of the prime minister and he will be coming to meet the prime minister. From where all these additionalities are coming, is beyond my comprehension", he said.

Kashmiri secessionist leader, Mr Shabir Shah in a *volte face* today said he would not formally talk to Mr KC Pant during his visit to the valley but did not reject an informal meeting if Mr Pant visited him at home.

# India rules out ganging up with US against China

HT Correspondent &  
Agencies  
New Delhi, May 28

INDIA HAS ruled out the possibility of a strategic alliance with the United States aimed at curbing China's influence in Asia.

External Affairs minister Jaswant Singh told a press conference today that India's relations with the US was "not hyphenated".

Reports from Washington quoting a statement by an official in the Bush administration however said that the US was keen on developing India as an ally against China. Singh brushed aside the suggestion, saying: "India is not a tool to be used against any third country."

On India's support for President George Bush's Ballistic Missile Defence plan, Jaswant said the Clinton administration had also supported the idea but had postponed a decision on it because of the elections.

He clarified that India has only lent conditional support to the New Strategic Framework announced by President Bush because it signals a departure from the Cold War era through a process of dialogue.

"In totality, the New Strategic Framework is to be supported in India's interests and we want to be part of the dialogue. Inherent in the Framework are concepts already proposed by India like No First Use, Deep Cuts and de-Alerts," the minister said.

**CPI slams Govt "surrender":** The CPI has opposed the Government's moves to privatise the defence sector and condemned its "surrender" to the US-crafted National Missile Defence by endorsing it.

The party wrapped up its three-day national council meeting by urging a united struggle to force the Government to withdraw its "harmful" policy of privatising defence and to stop the US' "diabolical" plan of imperialist globalisation.

Warning that opening the defence industry to private players and foreign investment would endanger the country's security and defence, the CPI also apprehended diversion of supplies to subversive militant elements. It recalled the influence the military-industrial complex exercised over Governments in certain countries and suspected a similar trend in India.

The CPI also attacked the NMD as the "new Star Wars plan" and the "new armed wing of the policies of imperialist globalisation",

## DELHI OPENS ARMS TO AFGHAN MINORITIES

INDIA IS willing to give "temporary shelter" to all opponents of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan including members of the minority Sikh and Hindu communities.

Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan have been asked to wear badges on their clothes that will set them apart from the rest of the population. India is already home to thousands of Afghan refugees, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh observed at a press conference today. The developments in Afghanistan had "deeply troubled" India and the international community, he said.

New Delhi has backed resolutions imposing sanctions on Afghanistan for practising fundamentalism and discriminating against women. "What we are witnessing in Afghanistan today, particularly the creation of Taliban, is a terrible legacy of the Cold War between the then USSR and USA. Pakistan has played a most important role and the US had also played its role," Singh said.

HTC, New Delhi

which would allow the US to attack other countries without fear of retaliation.

The defence system, according to the party, was part of the process to undermine global and regional peace by creating greater instability, insecurity and uncertainty and more conflicts and wars. It would destroy the existing international arms control and disarmament regime and trigger a wave of instability around the world, the Left party warned.

Expressing its "indignation" at the Government's "surrender" on an issue which even the US' own allies have not been in a hurry to welcome, the CPI said this stand was a reversal of the country's position on non-alignment and its spirit of peace, progress, disarmament and development.

India's support to the NMD and its "anti-China strategic position" would hamper cooperation and development of the two countries and disturb peace and tranquillity in the region and the world, the CPI said. It condemned the US categorisation of "rogue states" against whom the NMD would be used, and flayed the Government for accepting such a classification even if it includes countries with which India has friendly relations.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

6 J MAY 28

PAK. CANNOT DEFINE TERMS UNILATERALLY: JASWANT

# 'Our stand on J&K unaltered'

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, MAY 28. India today reiterated its commitment to peace and reconciliation with Pakistan but insisted that it would not allow Islamabad to unilaterally define the terms of a renewed political engagement between the two nations.

At a crowded press conference here today, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, said India was reluctant to "enter into any contention with Pakistan before Gen. Pervez Musharraf's visit here."

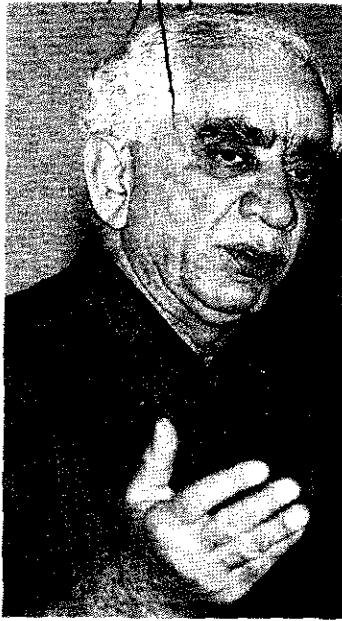
But pressed by reporters to clarify India's "bottom line" on the Kashmir dispute, Mr. Singh referred to the 1994 Parliament proclamation that the State of Jammu and Kashmir was 'an integral part of India.'

This reaffirmation of the traditional Indian position was said to be in response to the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar's emphasis on 'self-determination' for the people of Jammu and Kashmir and a 'plebiscite' to facilitate it.

"The Government is a servant of the Parliament, and the Parliament has said the whole of Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India. That stand remains unaltered," Mr. Singh said. He also dismissed the demand for a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir.

On Islamabad's formulation that Kashmir was the 'core issue' in the dialogue, Mr. Singh said that was Pakistan's 'interpretation'. He added that "India does not believe in a denominational definition of nationalism." The State of Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Singh declared, "is at the core of the nationhood of India."

Mr. Singh also threw cold water on Gen. Musharraf's apparent plans to meet in New Delhi a delegation of the Hurriyat, which Pakistan claims is the legitimate representative of the people of J&K. Declaring that the demand for a meeting between the two was a 'non-issue', Mr. Singh said Gen. Musharraf "is coming to In-



The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, at a press conference in New Delhi on Monday.

— Photo: R.V. Moorthy

dia at the invitation of the Prime Minister and to meet him," in a pointed reference to the main purpose of the visit.

"From where these additionalities do crop up, is beyond my comprehension," Mr. Singh said. The polite but firm message to Islamabad is that Gen. Musharraf will be treated as an esteemed guest and will be expected to behave like one. Mr. Singh was also conveying to Pakistan that its efforts to make the Kashmir issue the sole focus of Gen. Musharraf's visit were unacceptable.

While it was Islamabad's prerogative to focus on any issue it might want to, Mr. Singh was suggesting that Pakistan must make up its mind "on what kind of a relationship it wants with India and the rest of the world".

While rejecting Pakistan's attempts to shape the contours of Gen. Musharraf's visit, Mr. Singh was careful not let his verbal sparring with Mr. Sattar cloud the new Indian message on "walking the high road" with Pakistan.

Very courteous in his references to Gen. Musharraf, Mr. Singh suggested India had put the bitterness of the Kargil episode behind and was ready to receive a man whom it saw as the architect of that aggression two years ago.

Stressing the importance of 'moving beyond the confines of

history,' Mr. Singh averred that "unless we address the challenge of tomorrow, we will cause great damage to the people of the two nations."

Mr. Singh also referred to the Indian assessment that Gen. Musharraf is here to stay and India is ready to do business with him. Despite continuing opposition to the military overthrow of civilian regimes, Mr. Singh said India had decided to engage Gen. Musharraf.

## Approach with 'realism'

India would approach the talks with Gen. Musharraf with 'realism', Mr. Singh said and pointed to the 'long road ahead.' Lowering expectations from the General's visit, he counselled "patience and perseverance" in the search for reconciliation with Pakistan.

Mr. Singh stoutly defended the decision to engage Gen. Musharraf, but was unwilling to be drawn into a discussion on why India reversed its post-Kargil position that it would not engage Pakistan without an end to cross-border terrorism.

Pakistan silent; Shabir Shah's stance: Page 11

## Creating trust my mission: Pant

By Vinay Kumar

SRINAGAR, MAY 28. The Centre's interlocutor, Mr. K.C. Pant, arrived here today on a six-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir, expressing the hope that his efforts would ultimately lead to a political settlement of the complex Kashmir problem.

"The main thrust of my visit is to try to understand the aspirations, problems and difficulties of the people of Kashmir and see how we can make progress towards restoration of peace and normalcy in the State," Mr. Pant said while addressing a press conference here.

"I am not here to score any debating points. I am trying to see if I can be of any help towards finding a solution to the Kashmir issue which is a complex and long-pending one. It is my purpose to involve all those who are desirous of restoring peace in the State," Mr. Pant said.

To a query, Mr. Pant said he would meet the Jam-

mu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party leader, Mr. Shabir Shah, who had initially responded positively. "My objective is to create a climate of trust and it has to involve all sections of the people. There are all shades of opinion and my approach is one of understanding all opinions and I am prepared to listen to all of them."

To another question, he said many people were saying that ceasefire had become "ineffective." Referring to the lack of response from the Hurriyat, he said it should view things in totality and take a decision.

Mr. Pant began his visit with detailed discussions with the Jammu and Kashmir Governor, Mr. G.C. Saxena, and later held meetings with the representatives of the trading and business community. In the evening, he was briefed by senior officers of the security agencies on the prevailing situation in the State.

THE HINDU

## Govt. decision wise: Gujral

**NEW DELHI, MAY 27.** The former Prime Minister, Mr. I.K. Gujral, has said the decision to invite the Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf for bilateral talks "is a wise and prudent step" towards better relations between the two countries.

Cautioning against being euphoric about it, Mr. Gujral said normalising relations between the two nations would be a slow process. "All previous Governments have been trying to establish friendly ties with Pakistan. But its response was not good. Some military elements have been creating problems. The visit of Gen. Musharraf will show if there is any qualitative shift in Islamabad's thinking," he told UNI.

Civil societies in both countries want peace but fundamentalist elements in Pakistan have so far had an upper hand. "Their internal instability eliminated the democratic process and made the voice of fundamentalist forces stronger."

Within India, Mr. Gujral said, the Vajpayee Government should now tranquillise the situation in Jammu and Kashmir so that our external position could be controlled. He expressed satisfaction over the initiative of the Centre's negotiator, Mr. K.C. Pant, to open dialogue with Kashmiri leaders. There were certain shortcomings in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly resolution on autonomy, over which

the Pant initiative must evolve a common platform with Kashmiri leaders, he said.

However, the Government should have launched the Pant peace process right after declaration of a unilateral ceasefire in November last year.

India should emphasise that the secular character of Kashmir be preserved. There could be no bifurcation or trifurcation as had been suggested by some elements, he added.

He said New Delhi should not limit the forthcoming talks to Pakistan's interference in Kashmir but extend it to the composite dialogue process (CDP). The CDP, agreed upon between Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Sharif in New York in September 1998, includes an eight-point agenda on: peace and security, Jammu and Kashmir, the Siachen dispute, the Wullar Barrage, the Sir Creek, terrorism and drugs, economic and commercial cooperation and exchange at cultural levels.

Mr. Gujral denounced the Hurriyat Conference for claiming to be a true and sole representative of the Kashmiri people.

"What are their basic credentials? They did not win even a municipality election. Self recognition means nothing. The international talks are held between two countries," he said, suggesting that they keep their views within the Pant peace process.

*ME will* **ME will decide on cricket team's  
Pakistan tour: Uma** *TV 5/5*

**NEW DELHI:** Sports minister Uma Bharti has made known her displeasure at the "unilateral announcement" by the Board for Control of Cricket in India's (BCCI)



that the Indian team may play in Pakistan during the Asian Test Championship and said such a decision could only be taken by the ministry of external

affairs. The sports ministry's displeasure has been conveyed by the sports secretary to BCCI president A.C. Muthiah.

"They (the BCCI) should not take so much liberty in making such announcements," she told reporters. "To play in Pakistan, the BCCI has first to give a written proposal to the sports ministry which, in turn, will forward it to the ministry of external affairs. The final decision rests with the MEA," Ms Bharti said. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

7 MAR 2000

# Looking for new friends

IS INDIA coy about using the "C" word? After having attracted considerable flak for going public about China's "threat" to India after the May 1998 nuclear tests, the Vajpayee Government doesn't use the word China publicly. In a letter addressed to the then U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, after the nuclear tests, India had referred to the threat from China. Embarrassingly enough, Mr. Clinton, who later paid a much-trumpeted visit to India, promptly released Mr. Vajpayee's letter to the press.

Of late, India has launched a major diplomatic initiative in Southeast Asia. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, himself has visited Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia between January and May this year, and more visits are planned in coming months. Engagement at other levels, too, has been continuing. New Delhi

*While publicly downplaying the China angle in India's diplomacy, New Delhi is actively waving its flag in Southeast Asia, writes Amit Baruah.*

has been lobbying both ASEAN and individual South East Asian nations for a separate ASEAN-India summit-level interaction, a proposal on which the regional grouping is still to decide. Remember, too, the launch of the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) at Vientiane, Laos, in November 2000 by India, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Myanmar.

While not much has been heard about MGC since its launch, it does reflect India's desire to play a greater role in South East Asia. Interestingly, China was the only Mekong country which was left out of this inter-river grouping. This exclusion did not go unnoticed.

Myanmar, a country in which the strategic interests of India and China seem to collide, has also been given priority in the approach of the Vajpayee Government. High-level engagement with the military junta is no longer taboo. In fact, it is being encouraged.

There appears to be little doubt that the Vajpayee

Government's rediscovery of South East Asia stems from its self-perception of being a "major power" after the nuclear tests of May 1998. Not content with Pokhran-II, the BJP-led Government is redefining India's relations with the rest of the world, especially the United States.

The Vajpayee Government believes that India must play a "greater role" outside its immediate neighbourhood. In the ASEAN Regional Forum's Annual Security Outlook 2000, the Government argued: "India's security concerns extend beyond the conventional geographical definition of South Asia". "Given its size, geographical location, trade links... India's security environment ranges from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca across the Indian Ocean, including the Central Asian region in the North West,

China in the North East and South East Asia..."

Referring to Sino-Indian relations, the India section in the ARF Outlook said that the border areas had remained largely peaceful. "However, China's military modernisation — in particular nuclear and missile, its support to Pakistan, growing defence links with India's Bay of Bengal littoral neighbours, possible presence in the Indian Ocean, upgradation of defence assets... and doubts about the long-term stability of the region abutting India, necessitate its consideration as an abiding security concern," the report said. This report, which is not for public circulation, has chapters contributed by individual ARF nations and makes India's security concerns crystal clear. There is no ambiguity about what India perceives China to be doing.

However, for public consumption, senior representatives of the Vajpayee Government say that India wants good relations with China and even points to the security dialogue between the two



countries. "It (the China factor) is central to our engagement with several countries in South East Asia. But, if you ask the Government, such a concern will be promptly denied," one Indian official told this correspondent recently.

India's concerns have fitted in nicely with those expressed by the Bush administration. The "encounter" between the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, and Mr. George W. Bush at the White House came in the midst of the spy plane incident involving China. The new chemistry between India and the U.S. as exemplified in the "discussions" on the NMD reveal a new convergence between New Delhi and Washington on the need to "contain" Beijing.

While publicly downplaying the China angle in India's diplomacy, New Delhi is actively waving its flag in South East Asia, a region which China regards as crucial to its security.

From the current American point of view, China has been selected as enemy number one for the foreseeable future. American security "concerns" are shifting to the Pacific and China is certainly the focus of such "concerns". For many ASEAN countries, the American presence in the region has been seen as a counterpoise to this massive neighbour. Today, India believes that it can offer a

"counter pole" to Chinese influence.

However, India is no match for the Chinese economy and Beijing's readiness to pump money into the region. After completing his South Asia minus India visit, the Chinese Premier, Mr. Zhu Rongji, visited Thailand. The Thai Defence Minister, Mr. Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, was quoted as saying that China had agreed to underwrite the construction of a \$4 billion railway link between Thailand and China. In the Mekong countries, too, China has and remains willing to fund projects — a strategic strength that India currently doesn't have. To take the case of Myanmar, China has forged strategic links through investment and infrastructure projects and only recently India has been able to make an entry in the infrastructure area.

Whatever be the competitive aspects of the India-China relationship, outstanding bilateral issues make it imperative that New Delhi continue to engage Beijing to settle these questions. India, while building new equations with the U.S. and the rest of the world, must engage China meaningfully. Formal dialogue cannot substitute for trust and understanding. It cannot afford to look at China or South East Asia through an American prism.

THE HINDU

27 MAY 2001

# Govt.

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MAY 24.** The Congress today welcomed the Government's decision to invite General Pervez Musharraf, chief executive of Pakistan, for talks. The party also patted itself on the back saying the Government had finally come round to its view that it was important to engage Pakistan in talks. "After vacillating on the issue for months they have finally realised the merit in our position," said Mr. Natwar Singh.

Articulating his party's point of view, Mr. Singh, CWC member and chairman of the AICC's external affairs department, said the Government had taken six months to take the initiative adding "had the Government acted earlier innocent lives would not have been lost."

Voicing opposition to any third party involvement in the talks, he said, "the talks should only be between the two countries and on the basis of the Shimla Agreement." The focus should also be on trade, commerce, economy apart from military and security-related matters, the rationale being that "trade and economy will be the gateways to peace".

Pointing to the lack of clarity on the part of the Government, the CWC member said the official policy on the issue had been characterised by a series of flip-flops and there seemed to be no clarity of thought. "They have now done a 180-degree turn on the issue," he said. He was referring to the Government's earlier position

# has come round to our view: Cong.

important to involve that country in the talks if the problem had to be solved. On revoking of the ceasefire in Kashmir, Mr. Singh said his party had all along supported the Government in its measures to bring about peace.

## Left parties hail talks offer

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MAY 24.** The Left Parties today welcomed the Vajpayee Government's decision to invite the Pakistan Chief Executive, General Pervez Musharraf, for talks stating the move could lead to easing of tensions in the region. The CPI(M) politburo said the

party had always maintained that only a meaningful dialogue with Pakistan in pursuance of the Lahore Declaration and Shimla Agreement could lead to the easing of tension and also make New Delhi and Islamabad understand each other's views. The ceasefire could not have led to any "fruitful results" in the absence of direct talks between India and Pakistan. The invitation to Gen. Musharraf would also dispel the impression that India was avoiding direct talks as it did not respond earlier to the General's announcement that he was prepared to meet the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, anywhere.

"The CPI(M) hopes that the

talks between India and Pakistan would contribute to a great extent in reducing tension in the sub-continent," a politburo statement said.

## CPI endorses decision

The CPI said "though delayed, it is a positive step" and that there was no alternative to bilateral talks on all issues between the two countries, including Kashmir.

It said resumption of bilateral dialogue should not mean cessation of efforts and dialogue with various groups in Kashmir and suggested to include as many groups as possible in the parleys.

The party regretted that the Government did not take the Opposition into confidence on its Kashmir policy and urged the Prime Minister to consult opposition parties to evolve a consensus on a comprehensive Kashmir policy.

The CPI expressed resentment over the announcement that the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, would continue to hold dual charge as National Security Adviser. "Many questions have been raised about his conduct during his tenure in the PMO. Propriety demands that he is removed from the PMO while many matters involving him should be put under investigation".

The CPI-MI also held a similar view and said "mere politicking on Kashmir would not yield any result" but sincere and honest talks would build confidence among the people of the State.

## No contradiction in Kashmir stance: BJP

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MAY 24.** The Bharatiya Janata Party today "appreciated" the Government's "six-month-long efforts" to seek a peaceful solution to the Kashmir problem and blamed the "militant groups" operating in the Valley for spurning the offer of meaningful discussions, noting that they must "now be dealt with firmly."

The party did not seem to see any contradiction between its earlier stand that there could not be any talks with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue till that country stopped exporting terrorism, and its approval and justification of the Government's invitation to Pakistan's military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, for talks even as cross-border terrorism continues to take its daily toll.

The confusion in the party, resulting from the sudden change of track by the Government, was evident when in a press statement here today, Mr. Narendra Modi, BJP general secretary, noted that the party had

"taken the position that Pakistan must cease cross-border terrorism before we hold bilateral talks." At the same time, the statement saw the Government's invitation to Pakistan to be "in line with the Government's policy to seek a peaceful solution of bilateral problems." Naturally, the BJP was silent on whether it thought cross-border terrorism had ended. Instead, the party hoped that Pakistan would approach the talks with India in a "positive manner," and that these would be on the basis of the Lahore Declaration and the Shimla Agreement.

The party was cautious enough to state that the "history of the past 53 years" had shown "Pakistan always negates India's well-intentioned proposals." While hoping for "fruitful talks," the party let it be known that it did not think that the miracle of successful India-Pakistan talks would happen. Yet, ignoring past history, the party was ready to believe that "wiser counsel will prevail this time and the talks between India and Pakistan will be purposeful and fruitful."

# PM invites Musharraf for talks, calls off truce

## Pakistan says it will react positively to offer

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has decided to invite Pakistan military ruler, Gen Pervez Musharraf, for discussions in New Delhi even as the government called off the six-month-long ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir.

"In pursuance of the Lahore declaration and the Shimla agreement, the prime minister has decided to invite Gen Musharraf to visit India at his early convenience", minister for external affairs and defence, Jaswant Singh, announced after an hour-long meeting of the cabinet committee on security.

Pakistan said it would react positively to Mr Vajpayee's invitation. In the first reaction to the invitation to Gen Musharraf, Pakistan's foreign secretary Inamul Huq said "if and when the invitation is officially received, Pakistan will respond positively to it."

A formal invitation will be delivered shortly, Mr Singh said adding that the six-month phase of non-initiation of combat operations by the security forces against terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir "is now over."

"These terrorist groups have hindered the restoration of peace in Jammu and Kashmir and have inflicted misery upon the people there. Hereafter, the security forces shall take such action against terrorists as they judge best," Mr Singh said. Asked if the decision to invite Gen Musharraf to India was a negation of India's stand on Pakistan-backed terrorism, Mr Singh said India's fight against terrorism will continue without any let-up. Mr Singh said India is yet again offering the hand of friendship, reconciliation, cooperation and peace to Pakistan in the hope that this opportunity will be positively and purposefully utilised by Islamabad.

He said the security forces will, in the process, continue to exercise maximum care and ensure that no harassment is caused to the civilian population.

The minister said a gratifying feature of these last

six months has been the relative peace along the Line of Control on account of the restraint exercised by both sides. In this regard, the government has decided that it will continue to observe maximum restraint, Mr Singh said.

The process of dialogue initiated by Mr Vajpayee through its interlocutor K.C. Pant will continue unhindered, he said adding that "our invitation to all sections in Jammu and Kashmir to join this dialogue is reiterated." Before the meeting of the cabinet committee on security, the prime minister had taken key leaders including Sonia Gandhi, Chandrababu Naidu,

Bal Thackeray and George Fernandes into confidence. Home minister L.K. Advani had briefed Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah, official sources said. Among those present at the meeting which was chaired by Mr Vajpayee were Mr Advani, Mr Jaswant Singh, finance minister Yashwant Sinha, K.C. Pant, national security adviser Brajesh Mishra, army chief S. Padmanabhan and some other top officials.

Meanwhile, Hurriyat conference chairman, Abdul Gani Bhat, reacted cautiously to Mr Vajpayee's invitation to Gen Musharraf for talks on Kashmir saying "let us wait and watch." He said that he still believed that tripartite talks could produce better results by including Kashmir which is the principal party. When asked whether the Hurriyat welcomed Mr Vajpayee's initiative, Mr Bhat said, "I have reacted and have nothing more to say." Regarding the calling off of the ceasefire, he said "ceasefire or no ceasefire, the situation will never change and as a matter of fact the ceasefire never existed."

The BJP described the step as a "bold one in line with the mood of the people." "I congratulate the government for taking this bold decision as it is in line with the mood of the people," party president Jana Krishnamurthy said. (Agencies)

### THE GOODWILL GAMBIT



A.B. Vajpayee



Gen. Musharraf



# India condemns Taliban

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 23. - India today condemned the Taliban order enforcing distinctive clothing and distinguishing marks for persons of religious minorities and pressed for international pressure on the Taliban to resent such discriminatory orders.

Terming as these acts "reprehensible", India said "such edicts have no place in civilised societies and the international community has rightly deplored it."

The external affairs ministry said that it was an example of Taliban's "obscurantist and racist ideology, which is alien to Afghan traditions".

India believes any attempt to justify such edicts on religious grounds were reprehensible, the ministry spokesman said.

**G-15 meeting:** The sixth G-15 meet will be held in Jakarta from 25-31 May. The Vice-President, Mr Krishan Kant will lead the Indian delegation.



Sikh women come out of a gurdwara in Kabul on Wednesday. The Taliban has ordered all non-Muslim men to sport a yellow piece of cloth on their shirt pockets and women to wrap their heads with yellow cloth. - AP/PTI

The main summit meeting will be held on 30-31 May and the secretary, MEA, Mr RS Kalha, will represent Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee. The theme of the meeting is "Challenges of harnessing the potential of the digital era for development".

The meeting will focus on trade and development, new global economy and harnessing the potential new digital era for development, future directions on trade, finance and development and energising G-15 and G-8 interactions.

THE HINDU

24 MAY 2001

# Neighbouring countries' poor response irks govt

SHIVNATH JHA  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 22. - The government has expressed concern over the "partial implementation" of the resolutions passed during a series of meetings held with the Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan and Thailand governments to curb cross-border militancy, especially in the North-eastern states.

The home ministry sources said, "During the past six years, over a dozen meetings were held between the Indian government and its counterparts in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, Thailand and others and cooperation was sought to control the increasing clout of the militant organisations in the seven North-eastern states. But the result is 'almost' zero."

They said, "The problem is compounded as the state leaders are generally hand-in-glove with the ultra groups, especially in Manipur, Assam and Tripura." They added most militant organisations were getting financial aid and arms from other organisations

across the border. Despite being declared unlawful by the government, at least 14 militant organisations are working in five of the seven North-eastern states.

In Manipur, six major organisations including PLA, UNLF, PRPK and MLF have been active for decades followed by two each in Assam - Ulfa and NDFB, Nagaland - NSCN (Isak-Muiwah) and NSCN(K), Tripura - AITF and NLFT - and Meghalaya - ANVC and HNLC.

Because of the increasing trans-border linkage of militants over a dozen top diplomatic-level meetings with Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan and Nepal were held. "But none of the governments have responded positively so far in curbing militancy. The supply of sophisticated arms and ammunition from the neighbouring countries into India has increased," a home ministry official added.

In December last year, Mr CM Shafi Sami, foreign secretary of Bangladesh, visited India to review ways and means

of further consolidating and enhancing mutually beneficial trade and economic cooperation, including how to curb the growth of terrorist activities in the region.

Following this another meeting of the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Working Group in February was held to discuss security related issues.

"However, the majority of these issues including, action against the ultras hiding in Bangladesh, uninterrupted movement of Bangladeshis to Tin Bigha, illegal migration, border incidents, smuggling of arms and explosives, women and children trafficking - remain unimplemented," the official added.

Similarly, after the Myanmar home minister Mr Col Tin Hlaing's India trip in November last year, a high-level delegation led by HE General Maung Aye, vice-chairman of the Myanmar's State Peace and Development Council visited India to discuss, besides other things, international terrorism and

drug trafficking. Later, a four-member team, led by the additional secretary in the home ministry, Mr PD Shenoy, also visited Myanmar to study the approach to control militancy and bring rebel groups back into the mainstream.

"Though the Myanmar government had assured us help in combating cross-border militancy, most of the assurances remained on paper only", the official maintained.

India and Myanmar signed a pact to maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas on 29 January 1994.

Regarding Bodo and Ulfa hideouts in Bhutan, sources said the issue was taken up with the Bhutan government but there was no positive response.

Terming Nepal as a major centre for supply of foreign-made arms and ammunition to the militant organisations operating in India, the sources said, "Even after a decision taken at a home secretary level meeting to initiate suitable measures, Nepal has been turned into a major hideout for criminals and the source of illegal arms and ammunition."

## RESOLUTIONS ON CROSS-BORDER MILITANCY

THE STATESMAN

# Hindujas also 'fixed' Brajesh meeting with G-8 Ministers

11/5 By Hasan Suroor HD-13

**LONDON, MAY 10.** The intermediary role of the Hinduja brothers in the Vajpayee Government's diplomatic campaign over India's nuclear tests in the summer of 1998 is further highlighted in a leaked letter showing Mr. G.P. Hinduja's intervention with Downing Street to get the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's Principal Secretary, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, to meet the G-8 Foreign Ministers in London in June 1998.

This happened after the brothers accompanied Mr. Mishra to 10, Downing Street on June 4 to hand over Mr. Vajpayee's letter to the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair.

On June 9, Mr. G.P. Hinduja wrote to Mr. Blair's Chief of Staff, Mr. Jonathan Powell, suggesting that "Mr. Brajesh Mishra might be invited to meet the G-8 Foreign Ministers and discuss with them how India can respond to their concerns (over India's nuclear tests). The Prime Minister, Mr. Vajpayee, has agreed that he should do so, provided only that China is not present — given her nuclear links with Pakistan." He thanked Mr. Powell for "going out of your way to help each other gain a better understanding of the other's position."

This was a reference to Mr. Mishra's meeting with Mr. Blair. Downing Street has clarified that the Hinduja brothers were present at that meeting on behalf of the Government of India and "they had not been there at our invitation."

The disclosure of the Hindujas' active role in setting up meetings here on behalf of the Government

of India, independently of the Indian High Commission, is likely to embarrass the Vajpayee Government at a time when they are being investigated by the CBI in the Bofors case. Observers said it would take some of the sheen off the BJP's moral high ground over the Hindujas whom it has always projected as benefactors of the Congress.

The letter was released by the Tory MP, Mr. Andrew Tyrie, along with a set of leaked correspondence, refuelling speculation over the brothers' close links with Downing Street. He demanded that Mr. Blair disclose the full extent of his relationship with the Indian businessmen, and accused him of "concealing" the letters from Sir Anthony Hammond who inquired into the Hindujas' dealings with politicians following allegations that Mr. S.P. Hinduja was given a British passport as a favour for his family's one million pound contribution to the Millennium Dome.

The letters, exchanged between June 1998 and September 2000, indicate a degree of intimacy which surprised observers. In his correspondence, Mr. Blair consistently addressed Mr. Gopichand Hinduja as "Dear G.P." and signed off with "Yours ever, Tony."

In a letter to "G.P." on July 26, 1999 — the period when India and Pakistan were engaged in a bloody conflict in Kargil — Mr. Blair expresses his happiness over India's decision to stop air strikes against Pakistani infiltrators and urges him convey to "your interlocutors in both countries" Britain's desire to encourage India and Pakistan to

solve the Kashmir problem in a way that "reflects the views of the people living in Kashmir."

In another letter, he acknowledges Mr. G.P. Hinduja's communication welcoming the appointment of Mr. Keith Vaz as a Minister and expresses his "gratitude to the Hinduja family" for their help in promoting multi-racialism in Britain. Observers said the letter was significant in the context of the persistent speculation that Mr. Vaz owed his ministerial position to the Hindujas and, in return, he obliged them whenever they needed his help — including British citizenship for Mr. S.P. Hinduja.

Mr. Blair, who has been criticised for "hobnobbing" with the Hindujas despite "MI6 warnings" that they were being investigated in a corruption scandal, denied that he had committed any impropriety. "If you have any complaints about my propriety or anyone else's, you should make to the proper authorities in the proper way", he told a Tory MP in the Commons.

## Shabir Shah's office attacked

**SRINAGAR, MAY 10.** Militants today attacked the headquarters of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) of Mr. Shabir Shah at Rajbagh in the City this afternoon. Activists of a lesser-known militant outfit, Al-Hamas, lobbed a hand grenade towards Mr. Shah's office. However, the grenade after hitting the main board of the DFP headquarters exploded on the roadside without causing any damage. UNI

THE HINDU

11 MAY 2001



History is not black and white. Especially the mistakes of war

# Jaswant's three errors

45-8 10/5 BY A.G. NOORANI

**A** DISSENT in a court of last resort is an appeal to the brooding spirit of the law, to the intelligence of a future day when a later decision may possibly correct the error into which the dissenting judge believes the court to have been betrayed," the Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court, Charles Evans Hughes, once remarked. Minister for External Affairs Jaswant Singh in his lecture on India's security and foreign policy at Patna on April 31, deserves attention.

India, he said, is paying the price for three major foreign policy blunders committed in the last 54 years. The first, in his view, was reference of the Kashmir issue to the United Nations Security Council on December 31, 1947. The second was its failure to get the border with China delineated. The last was India's stand on the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979. Succeeding generations would have to suffer for these three foreign policy blunders, he lamented.

Opinions on those decisions will differ. But a revisionist view of history is always refreshing, especially when it comes from a foreign minister. The three decisions do merit close analysis. However, some factors must be borne in mind in any retrospect.

One is the context, the actual setting, bearing in mind Namier's warning "do not argue with history". Another is the availability of other options. Moreover, the aftermath must not be overlooked in any assessment of "the price". Related to the impact is the contemporary relevance; the lesson to be drawn "from the blunder". This is particularly true about the China decision which is why it is discussed last.

The Kashmir blunder is part of conventional wisdom. Jawaharlal Nehru himself "was later deeply to regret it", his biographer S. Gopal avers. But, he adds, that the reference to the UN was "expressly coupled with full military preparations to move the war, if necessary, into Pakistan". The British government feared just that, as the American envoy reported to his government. Inspiration for the reference came from Mountbatten who first proposed on December 8 a joint Indo-Pak reference.

Some questions are in order. Would Mountbatten have made the suggestion without prior clearance with London? And what was there to prevent London from moving the UN to prevent a "threat to the peace", especially since the prime ministers of India and Pakistan kept making charges against each other to the UN? Was the UN a fair arena for the Indian PM, as if he was an umpire?



LIGHT AND ENLIGHTENMENT: K.R. Narayanan, A.B. Vajpayee and Jaswant Singh

Pakistan could have filed its own complaint, as it did eventually. In either event, India would have lost the high ground of the complainant.

In that clime, neither the ceasefire on New Year's Day 1949 nor the agreement on July 27, 1949, delineating the ceasefire line, would have been possible without mediation. India agreed to a ceasefire only after it had cleared the Valley and more of the invaders. It decided not to recover the rest of the state because the gains had to be balanced against an all-out war and external intervention. Nehru's secret memo to Sheikh Abdullah from Sonamarg on August 25, 1952 poured scorn on the UN's capacity to prevent him from pursuing any policy he wished in respect of Kashmir ("Whatever the UN might say").

As for Afghanistan, Indira Gandhi won the Lok Sabha polls on January 7, 1980 but assumed power only on January 14. The caretaker Charan Singh government properly asked her to define the stand India should take in the UN General Assembly during this week. Draft instructions were prepared at her instance by T.N. Kaul and G. Parthasarathi, known for their pro-Soviet bias. The then Secretary (East) in the MEA, Eric Gonsalves, told Dennis Kux, "Ministry officials tried to soften the language, but were able only to gain acceptance for a few changes."

On January 12, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Brajesh C. Mishra, made his famous statement. It recalled the Soviet plea of an Afghan "request" to

intervene and assurances of withdrawal: "We have no reason to doubt assurances particularly from a friendly country like the Soviet Union with whom we have many close ties." President Carter was "livid" when he heard of it. It revived memories of India's stand when the USSR invaded Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968).

Apologists make two points. There was no other option and Indira Gandhi made plain her disapproval in private. Neither point is valid. Sound alternative had been crafted by professionals. Prime Minister Charan Singh was out electioneering when late in the night on December 27, 1979, the Soviet ambassador, Yuri Vorontsov, met Foreign Secretary Ram D. Sathe and informed him of the Afghan "request" and the Soviet action. The next day the MEA issued a statement recording the Soviet intimation, but expressing support for Afghanistan's independence. It expressed the hope that no "external power (read US) will take steps which might aggravate the situation". The official spokesman was explicit on one point: "I do not know who invited the Soviets."

On December 31, India made two separate moves. Eric Gonsalves called in US ambassador Robert Goheen to express India's concern over the reported lifting of embargo on the supply of arms by the US to Pakistan. The same day Charan Singh told the Soviet ambassador that he hoped the Soviet troops would withdraw from Afghanistan as soon as possible.

An official statement recorded: "The Prime Minister pointed out that the pres-

ence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan would have far-reaching adverse consequences for this region and for this reason expressed the hope that the Soviet troops would withdraw from Afghanistan as soon as possible in accordance with the message conveyed by the Soviet leadership."

Not once did Indira Gandhi publicly and specifically ask for the withdrawal of Soviet troops as Charan Singh did. She went out of her way publicly and repeatedly to support the Soviet case that it was there legitimately on the invitation of the Afghan government — in an interview with Barbara Walters of ABC on January 10, 1980, and later.

Given her public support, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko could take in his stride the PM's stand in her talks with him in Delhi, on February 12 that she found the Soviet action "unacceptable".

An enlightened appreciation of the national interest would have served, both, the interests of peace and the cause of friendship. In all of Asia, India was the only friend Russia had, if India had pulled its weight it could — and in the light of archival disclosures, would have made a big difference; not by a simplistic public stand but through a coherent policy which would have prevented the US arming of Pakistan as a frontline State — while assuring it and Pakistan that it would respect Pakistan's security — ensured Soviet withdrawal by boosting the morale of dissent in the Kremlin and yet retained Soviet friendship.

It was a cabal of three — KGB chief Yuri Andropov, Defence Minister Ustinov and Gromyko — who presented the Politburo "with a fait accompli" at its meeting on December 12, 1979. As a Soviet inquiry reported in 1980, "A strong opponent of the action, the PM, Alexei Kosygin, was hospitalised."

India could have been an active participant in diplomatic efforts to secure Soviet withdrawal without being hostile to the USSR. However, neither Indira Gandhi nor her advisors were motivationally prepared for the kind of adjustments which this entailed.

On January 17, a chastened Gromyko reported to the Politburo "the international situation around Afghanistan has taken a turn for the worse" — despite India's support. Its opposition would have induced withdrawal. Instead, the USSR stayed put. Afghanistan was ruined. And India and Pakistan embarked on an arms race aided by their respective friends.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 MAY 2001

# Centre builds 'national cause' shield for Mishra

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, May 8: Embarrassed by reports that it had sought the help of the Hinduja brothers, accused in the Bofors case, to meet British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the government put up a brave front and said it was only "meeting a national cause".

Leading British newspapers reported yesterday that the Hinduja brothers accompanied Prime Minister Atal Bihari's Vajpayee's principal secretary Brajesh Mishra to a meeting with Blair in London in July 1998.

Launching a damage-control exercise, foreign ministry spokesman R.S. Jassal said today: "The Hinduja brothers offered to facilitate some meeting. That offer was naturally accepted."

Jassal said Mishra was touring several important capitals after the nuclear tests of May 1998 to clarify India's position. It was important for Delhi to justify its stand, especially to the Permanent Five countries and Britain was one of them, he added.

Asked why the government needed to turn to the Hinduja brothers, Jassal said: "There was a certain urgency in establishing such contact." He claimed that even in the past, the government has sought help from business houses and industrialists to establish contact with important countries.

The spokesman, however, refused to confirm that the Hinduja brothers were present at the meeting, saying he was not aware of the details.

The Congress, which has been at the receiving end of the Bofors case, demanded that the Vajpayee regime take the nation into confidence on the issue. Party

spokesman S. Jaipal Reddy said: "We don't know the facts but the government owes an explanation to the nation on the sequence of events that led to the meeting."

Asked if no effort was made by the Indian high commission, the foreign office or the Prime Minister's Office to fix up the meeting other than depending on a business house which was under investigation in a defence scam, Jassal replied: "These things are not mutually exclusive." He argued that at the time of the meeting, chargesheets were not issued against them.

In private, foreign ministry officials said Britain was one of the countries which had taken a tough line on the nuclear tests and had even recalled its high commissioner to Delhi.

"It was necessary for us to get in touch with the British government at the highest-level possible and explain Delhi's rationale behind the tests."

But there was no one in the Indian high commission in London who had a good rapport with the Labour government. Former Indian envoy L.M. Singhvi had been close to the Tories but after him, no effort was made to cultivate the Labour which came to power. Using the help of the Hinduja brothers was the only option left, South Block argues.

Despite the brave front, some diplomats have started raising questions in private whether it was prudent of the National Democratic Alliance government to seek the help of the Hinduja brothers.

Since the ruling coalition had turned the Bofors scam into an important political plank, it should have shown more caution in engaging the Hinduja brothers for the meeting.



Brajesh Mishra

THE TELEGRAPH

9 MAY 2001

# Don't antagonise China on NMD, says Cong.

By C. Raja Mohan

10-1  
8/5  
**NEW DELHI, MAY 7.** Pointing to the negative impact of Sino-U.S. tensions on India's security environment, the Congress today cautioned the Government against lending uncritical support to the U.S. plans to build national missile defences.

In drawing attention to the long term implications of India drawing too close to the U.S. on NMD, the Congress may be reflecting some of the unease in a section of the Indian strategic community at the future of Sino-Indian relations.

The Congress believes India must strive to improve its relations with the U.S.; but the party insists the Government should do nothing to queer the pitch for Sino-Indian relations, which have been normalised with some difficulty after overcoming the chill of May 1998 when India conducted nuclear tests.

If India begins to align itself with the U.S. on global security issues, there is some concern here that China may embrace Pakistan even more tightly than before.

When the Chinese Prime Minister Mr. Zhu Rongji begins his travels through the sub-continent later this week, some indications might emerge on how Beijing and Islamabad view India's enthusiastic response to the NMD.

Mr. K. Natwar Singh, who chairs the Congress' foreign affairs department, today called on the Government to "convince us that U.S. President George Bush's new nuclear and missile doctrine is in the interest of the country".

"If a national consensus emerges in favour of NMD", Mr. Singh added, "the Congress will not stand in the way". He accused the Government of not consulting either its allies or opposition parties in its "unseemly rush" to welcome the U.S. plans.

Mr. Singh, along with his colleague Mr. Jairam Ramesh, who runs the party's economic cell, was expanding on the Congress critique of the Government's response to the NMD at a press conference here today.

The Congress' decision to underscore the implications for India's relations with China may be of some significance. Mr. Ramesh insisted that "India should not fall into the trap of believing it would gain from a Sino-U.S. conflict in Asia".

Mr. Ramesh demanded that India look at the relations with China from its own perspective and not from that of the U.S. It is widely believed that the U.S. plans for NMD are directed against China, and this could further strain Sino-U.S. relations in the coming years.

Mr. Ramesh also pointed to some economic implications of the unfolding tensions between U.S. and China. He said the Bush administration might now seek to delay China's entry into the World Trade Organisation. "This might hurt India more than the U.S.". He was referring to the reality that Beijing and New Delhi were competitors in trade and target the same markets. Left outside WTO, according to Mr. Ramesh, China will be under less of a compulsion to abide by any rules.

# India, Russia get behind Bush nuclear shield

HT Correspondent

New Delhi, May 4 9:10 pm

INDIA AND Russia today discussed the international ramifications of United States President George Bush's new security policy. Russia's foreign minister, Igor Ivanov, and India's external affairs minister Jaswant Singh agreed during their talks today that the two countries need to be in close consultation with each other as the US proposals concerned global security.

In his first public reaction today to the US proposal, made during a joint press conference, the Indian minister said he was against the unilateral abrogation of the 1972 Anti Ballistic Missile treaty. He reminded his guests that India's welcome to the US plan was a qualified one. "Between mutually agreed decisions and mutually assured destruction we prefer the former," he said.

Ivanov made it clear he had no objections to India's optimism regarding Washington's new nuclear plans. "Our approaches mostly coincide," he said. He said he was looking forward to meeting the delegation of experts that the US President has promised to send to explain the US plan in detail. "But we will not just listen. We have something to say."

Ivanov's statements were contrary to expectations that Russia would react adversely to India's embrace of Bush's missile-based nuclear doctrine. Along with a press conference he had held about Bush's plan just before leaving for India, his statements indicate Moscow has taken note that Bush had stated Russia was not a strategic adversary of the US.

Prior to his meeting with Singh, Ivanov had called on Prime Minister Vajpayee and gave him a letter from President Vladimir Putin, which proposed specific steps to improve bilateral co-operation.

Russia has welcomed a greater participation by India in its economic recovery and hopes for more joint ventures.

A summit level meeting was proposed for November in Moscow and India confirmed that Vajpayee would be accepting the offer.

On the question of a New Delhi-Moscow-Beijing axis, the two foreign ministers said the idea harked back to Cold War-era formations which were no longer desirable. Ivanov said all three countries were working with each other on a bilateral basis.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 MAY 2001



## Left attacks Govt.'s NMD endorsement

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MAY 4.** The Left parties today reacted sharply to the Vajpayee Government's "uncritical" endorsement of the U.S. National Missile Defence programme charging it with "mortgaging" India's right to strategic autonomy and demanding immediate re-consideration.

In separate statements, the CPI (M) and the CPI, said the Government had done away with the consensus approach on independent foreign policy and reversed its basis of peace, nuclear disarmament and promotion of friendship and cooperation with all, particularly the countries neighbours.

"The alacrity in hailing Mr. (George) Bush reflects servile confirmation of the worst order. Clearly, the Vajpayee Government is mortgaging India's right to strategic autonomy and an independent foreign policy. This only confirms the fact that India under this government seeks to emerge as a U.S. surrogate in South Asia," the CPI(M) politburo said.

It said the "more loyal than the king" approach of the Vajpayee

government was reflective of India seeking a strategic dependence on U.S. imperialism and charged that New Delhi had jettisoned the consensual approach towards an independent foreign policy. "India's acquiescence to imperialist global interests comes when even some of the closest allies of the U.S. have chosen to be more circumspect," it said adding even within the U.S., the issue was "deeply divisive" and that the impetus for the NMD had come from the arms lobby which had earlier promoted the "Star Wars" programme.

The CPI said that by endorsing the NMD, on which the U.S. allies in Europe and Asia had expressed reservations, the Vajpayee Government was dragging the country into an "aggressive drive which will unleash new and multi-sided nuclear arms race".

On the External Affairs Ministry reaction, it said the use of phrases such as detachment from "adversarial legacy of the Cold War" was a continuation of the downslide in foreign policy affairs which had begun since the Vajpayee Government came to power.

THE HINDU

5 MAY 2001

# In praise of diplomatic exuberance

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, MAY 6. Was it a political blunder? Or a stroke of diplomatic genius? Whichever way you look at it, India's swift and effusive welcome to American proposals on national missile defence (NMD) last week was certainly uncharacteristic of the Foreign Office.

The South Block is not known to react rapidly to international developments. And when it does, the thumb rule is to err on the side of understatement.

Intellectual exuberance, rational or otherwise, is generally frowned upon by foreign offices everywhere. Professional diplomats are encouraged to cultivate scepticism and flaunt it.

An unwillingness to be taken in by hype of any kind, the determination to look at the downside of every development, and a penchant to examine the gift horse in the mouth are considered virtues in a diplomat.

Diplomatic *sang froid* may be eminently sensible in normal times. But when big changes are afoot, there is a tectonic movement in geopolitics, or when a radical course correction becomes a national imperative, scepticism is a huge barrier against successful foreign policy.

Cynics cannot respond to change. Coping with a shifting paradigm demands some intellectual passion as well as diplomatic imagination that looks beyond conventional wisdom.

It is at revolutionary moments that diplomacy of the run of the mill kind is separated from statesmanship that positions a country to take advantage of a rapidly evolving situation.

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Recall India's response to the changes that Mikhail Gorbachev brought to Russia in the mid to late 1980s. The failure to anticipate the impact of *glasnost* and *perestroika* on the Soviet political system delayed the badly-needed adjustments in India's foreign policy.

It appeared at times that there were more people in New Delhi than in Moscow betting on the survival of the Soviet Union or longing for its return after 1991. It was the traditionalist framework that prevented India from even thinking about the prospect of a collapse of the system in Moscow; because we wanted it to be there so badly.

Similarly, India had little time for the agenda of reforms that Deng Xiaoping unleashed

on China at the end of 1970s and no attempt was made to understand its long-term impact on the Asian balance of power. India's determination to tail Moscow in dealing with China during the 1970s and early 1980s also delayed New Delhi's own normalisation of relations with Beijing by nearly a decade.

These were moments when an inspired thought would have got many diplomatic gains. But the conservatives and cynics kept India down on the beaten path and stopped it from coming to terms with radical change in its environment.

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Despite all the flak the foreign office statement on NMD has drawn, there were very few departures from past Indian positions. India's support for deep cuts being proposed by President Bush, its call for de-alerting of nuclear forces, and its endorsement of the talks among major powers on NMD are reasonably straight forward.

There was just one inspired thought in the statement. It was about the strategic and tech-

## DIPLOMATIC NOTEBOOK

nological "inevitability" of the shift away from the old nuclear order based on balance of terror to one in which there would be a place for defensive technologies.

This is as much of an intellectual conviction as it is an assessment of the emerging trend away from "prevailing nuclear orthodoxies". As an "outcast" in the old nuclear order, India has every reason to herald its demise and welcome the construction of a more credible global nuclear arrangement.

The current regime built around mutual assured destruction among five nuclear weapon powers and non-proliferation for the rest had no room for India in it. President Bush has declared that the *ancien regime* based on the ABM Treaty and the NPT is collapsing under the weight of its own contradictions.

There is hardly any reason why India should be shedding tears at the demise of the old nuclear order. President Bush's plan which opens the door for a rewriting of the rules of the nuclear game offers India a chance to be part of the nuclear solution and not the proliferation problem.

It makes all sense for India to lend a helping hand to the United States to dismantle the current nuclear regime, which New Delhi has

long called "discriminatory". India needs to follow this through with a set of responsible ideas for constructing a more effective nuclear regime.

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In responding to President Bush's proposed transition to a different nuclear order, the Foreign Office clearly sensed the strategic opportunity at hand. India could either seize the moment for significant future strategic gains or to play it safe by reacting in general inanities on "weaponisation of outer space", etc.

India chose the former course. For New Delhi had nothing to lose by welcoming the ideas of President Bush, while outlining a set of its own demands on nuclear reductions and technological cooperation among democratic states.

To be sure, the post-mortem will go on; how did India react so positively and so fast. There are also questions on how the Indian decision to support NMD was arrived at.

That debate may indeed be healthy. But the immediate task is to build on the statement the Foreign Office has issued in response to the proposals by President Bush. His special envoy, Mr. Richard Armitage, will be here on Friday to brief the Indian Government on the details of the Bush initiative.

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For once the Indian establishment might have got it right in sensing the importance of responding positively to the U.S. proposals on NMD. But the Government is being pilloried for acting in haste. An editorial writer has accused India of "irrational exuberance" on the NMD.

For far too long, intellectual sterility and diplomatic passivity have passed off as "strategic thinking" in India. New Delhi could certainly do with a little more passion and exuberance in its diplomacy.

It is time for New Delhi to experiment with new ideas on the foreign policy front. And not just in dealing with the United States; but across the board — from recasting positions at multilateral forums to solving long-standing problems say with China, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Foreign policy exuberance, even if irrational on occasions, is preferable to moribund slogans of the past. A frequent dose of it should hopefully make the next generation of senior Indian diplomats less prone to an early arterial sclerosis.

THE HINDU

# A ticket to ride



SEEMA MUSTAFA

The ministry of external affairs issued a release late on Wednesday night enthusiastically welcoming the nuclear doctrine outlined by US President George W. Bush. Journalists rushed to the ministry to seek clarifications and further details. They met MEA spokesperson Raminder Jassal — more preoccupied these days with Israeli leader Sharon than with Bush — who could not get further than a few well rehearsed lines centering around improved India-US relations. They met foreign secretary Chokila Iyer who had little to say, although she greeted them warmly and made them feel at home in South Block. They met extra-Constitutional authority Arun Singh who rushed off saying briefing the media was not his brief. They finally met minister Jaswant Singh who pointed them in the right direction. "US deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage is arriving here on May 10, meet him," said the minister, "he will brief you on Government of India's position."

A very possible scenario. For judging from the little bits of information filtering out of the ministry of external affairs, the bureaucrats themselves are unsure about this sudden turn of events and need to be briefed about the pros and the cons of the nuclear doctrine being so willingly accepted by India. Or at least the pros as the cons obviously do not exist insofar as this government and its strange relations with the US are concerned. Till Wednesday the word was that India was not at all supportive of the National Missile Defence System. In the stealth of night the position had been reversed, and India had beaten all countries, even loyal UK, to endorse a nuclear doctrine that can spell nothing but chaos and danger for the region.

Mr Jaswant Singh is the man at the helm of affairs. He has only one agenda: to cosy up with the Americans regardless of who is in power in Washington, regardless of their policies, regardless of India. He does not have the national interest in mind, for in his mind national interest is synonymous with US interest. He does not see any difference. If the US wants to establish its hegemony in the world, so be it so long as India is allowed to bask in the shadows. If the US wants to hasten the militarisation and nuclearisation of outer space, well and good. For if support can give India a US smile, then support it should and shall be.

Foreign policy is being reversed. Not through considered inputs by the bureaucrats, but through a political agenda signed by Mr Jaswant Singh. And endorsed by friend and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. And executed by other friend, Arun Singh. And the foreign secretary is not expected to stand in the way. She cannot, she is still learning the job. And



**LITTLE BROTHER SYNDROME:** Jaswant Singh (right) with Colin Powell; 'The US could not have a better friend in Jaswant Singh. President Bush and his advisors, to give them credit, have realised this rather early in the day. Hence, the one gesture that had our minister popping a bottle of champagne with our scribes: the great, absolutely fantastic meeting with President Bush epitomising the success of our foreign policy! To what end?'

needs all the support she can get from the minister who is a generous man if nobody is putting impediments in his way. One can just think of the *tamasha* if one of the veterans who now come under the collective "former foreign secretaries" banner were in position today. It is difficult to imagine some of them kow-towing to a policy that defies all logic and understanding, and which is liberally laced with connotations that at best can be described as anti-India and at worst as traitorous.

India's relations with her neighbours are dismal. Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and of course bete noire Pakistan are simmering. One has only to meet the diplomats of the respective countries to get a

taste of not just the neighbours' grievances but their mounting anger and resentment against the policies being pursued by the present government. There is a certain arrogance in our dealings with the smaller countries, in marked contrast with the servility with which we greet the so called developed nations. The difference is palpable, and does not make for great diplomacy.

One telephone call from US national security advisor Condoleezza Rice, and Jaswant Singh was dancing. He changed Indian foreign policy in a minute, to please her and the establishment she represents. Pokharan II was justified by this very government on two grounds: one, that it would establish India's sovereignty in an increasingly nuclear world and two, it would help India strengthen its campaign for nuclear disarmament. We are committed to ridding the world of nuclear weapons, said the same men even as a shocked nation at the time tried to digest the full impact of the dramatic shift in policy.

The same government, the same Jaswant Singh has turned foreign policy around again. Not to get back to a nuclear free world by dismantling all weapons, but to help Bush establish the supremacy of the US and its complete control on the nuclear world, and on outer space. His policy will set off a dangerous arms race as instead of promoting deterrence it is seeking to establish the principle of hitting back by ensuring that the opponent is left without the means to hit back. As nuclear experts have pointed out this policy has nothing to do with the so called rogue nations, but comes from elements in the US establishment who were unable to promote Reagan's Star Wars and have decided to push through this even more dangerous sequel.

India has embraced this policy. Not for reward but out of commitment and dedication to the US cause. Jaswant Singh is not asking for favours, he wants to embrace the US as he believes that salvation lies through this path. There can be no other explanation for the foolhardy decision to endorse and accept a policy that can

only destabilise global security. The other explanation is that the minister is anti-national, but that label is meant only for certain journalists, members of the Opposition and others who have not succumbed to the lures of the present regime. It cannot apply to our honourable minister, after all he is determining the destiny of our nation.

China will have to expand its arsenal. It will have to set up a system of its own. At present it has 20 missiles that have the range to hit the US. But obviously in the new nuclear world being set up by the US with India standing on the sidelines and applauding loudly, these will count for nothing. Nuclear weapons are evil. All in the world have reached this consen-

Take our bilateral relations with the countries in the world. UK has become a great friend with Robin Cook having sunk his anti-India rhetoric to dine with Jaswant Singh as a personal friend. Iraq remains out of the periphery but Iran is very much in. Israel is the new friend, the Arab nations have to take second place. As for the Palestinians, India has decided to watch them being killed in stoic silence. Sharon is the new hero with many in the Foreign Office speaking highly of him, despite the fact that he masterminded a Jallianwala Bagh in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila and his credentials are known

sus, the difference being that while some insist these are a necessary evil, others would like to see nuclear arsenals dismantled as the first step towards a nuclear free world. The Bush administration is going beyond all conceivable limits in giving teeth to a programme that will change the definition of security and peace as the world knows it today.

Jaswant Singh has become completely unaccountable. For him all roads lead to Washington in the belief that India's bilateral relations with other countries can be handled through the prism of India-US relations. India's foes can be turned into friends through a little arm twisting by Washington, after all Iran and Saudi Arabia were only too glad to fall in line after a little resistance in the beginning. And India's friends can benefit from this emerging alliance which is quite prepared to look after its own. A little hiccup remains over Pakistan, but that our minister hopes will soon be overcome.

Take our bilateral relations with the countries in the world. UK, after initial hostility, has become a great friend with Robin Cook having sunk his anti-India rhetoric to dine with Jaswant Singh as a personal friend. Iraq remains out of the periphery but Iran is very much in. Israel is the new great friend, the Arab nations have to take second place. As for the Palestinians, India has decided to watch them being killed in stoic silence. Sharon is the new hero with many in the Foreign Office speaking highly of him, despite the fact that he masterminded a Jallianwala Bagh in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila and his credentials are known.

Russia is presently trying to improve relations with the US, and India has decided to respond warmly as well. China is the big question mark in the horizon and with the Bush administration determined to increase the distance between Washington and Beijing, India can be expected to follow suit. Otherwise it would have hesitated to so quickly endorse a nuclear programme being opposed vociferously by China at this stage. As for the neighbours, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal barely figure in Washington's scheme of things. Nor in Delhi's which is quite happy to follow the leader. A pattern is emerging, it has to be analysed and understood for a full understanding of Indian foreign policy.

In the meanwhile the US could not have a better friend in Jaswant Singh. President Bush and his advisors, to give them credit, have realised this rather early in the day. Hence, the one gesture that had our minister popping a bottle of champagne with our scribes: the great, absolutely fantastic meeting with President Bush epitomising the success of our foreign policy! To what end?

It is very clear that the terms are US terms. The end is to be determined by the US. The means can vary to some extent. But in the final analysis India, for good relations with the US, will have to toe the well stated bottom line. This will run counter to Indian policy. It will conflict with India's pride and sovereignty. But then look at the positive side. New Delhi will have Washington's approval, and Jaswant Singh an ever ready ticket to the White House.

# India moving away from being 'global nanny', say U.S. experts

By Chidanand Rajghatta  
The Times of India News Service

WASHINGTON: How times change. There was an era not so long ago when India and Russia, like the Soviet Union, both on the same side of the Cold War, wouldn't be caught dead backing the United States militarily.

But in a tectonic shift in mindsets, positions, attitudes and strategic imperatives, the two countries have emerged with the most positive reactions to President George W. Bush's new proposals on a U.S.-led Nuclear Missile Defence, while opposition to the move comes from China and many of America's European allies.

There is also widespread scepticism about the proposals within a large domestic American constituency and among many political and strategic commentators in the U.S. While there has been some surprise about Russia's conciliatory response, India's remarkable turnaround in welcoming most of the Bush proposals after years of pursuing a vigorous disarmament agenda has startled many experts. Most of them said

India's foreign policy was beginning to reflect a new realism.

"It is part of a trend away from India being a global nanny and towards becoming a state that views these issues in terms of Indian security interests," Stephen Cohen, a South Asia scholar with the Brookings Institution, said in an interview.

Michael Krepon, another prominent arms control and disarmament expert with the Stimson Center, said, "It's evident that the government of India has chosen to score points with the Bush administration in the quest for larger stakes." But while recognising the shift in Indian security thinking, both Mr Cohen and Mr Krepon warned about the fallout in the neighbourhood.

"There can be no illusions, however, about the potential for adverse effects on the sub-continent resulting from Chinese reactions to U.S. missile defence deployments. Minimising negative repercussions must be part of the transformation now under way from Cold War nuclear and defence postures," Mr Krepon said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

4 MAY 2001

A section of PM's foreign policy camp frowns on swift endorsement

# Support to Bush splits Atal aides

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, May 3: The external affairs ministry's swift and effusive response to the US' sweeping security blueprint appears to have divided Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's foreign policy establishment, which has two of his closest aides.

President George W. Bush's plan, announced yesterday, involves scaling back nuclear arsenal and building a missile defence system. The missile shield will include a network of installations which, analysts say, will undermine a Russian treaty considered the cornerstone of nuclear deterrence during the Cold War.

The ministry of external affairs welcomed Bush's announcement yesterday, describing it as an attempt to make a "clean break from the past", especially the "adversarial legacy of the Cold War". But others in the security establishment are asking whether the foreign ministry has "jumped the gun", responding even before the implications of the new policy have started sinking in.

According to them, the ready response might show India as a client state of the US. But those in favour feel it is time India stopped being ambiguous on crucial issues.

Sources say foreign minister Jaswant Singh, who is also looking after defence, and Brajesh Mishra, Atal Bihari Vajpayee's principal secretary and the national security adviser, are behind the two schools of thought.

There is little doubt that Singh was behind the foreign ministry's effusive stand. "India believes that there is a strategic and technological inevitability in stepping away

from a world that is held hostage by the doctrine of mutually-assured-destruction (MAD) to a co-operative, defensive transition that is underpinned by further cuts and a de-alert of nuclear forces," the ministry statement said.

The Mishra camp feels India should have waited a little longer as even US allies like the UK, which has supported most American initiatives, are yet to make clear their stand. Japan and South Korea have also not taken a stand.

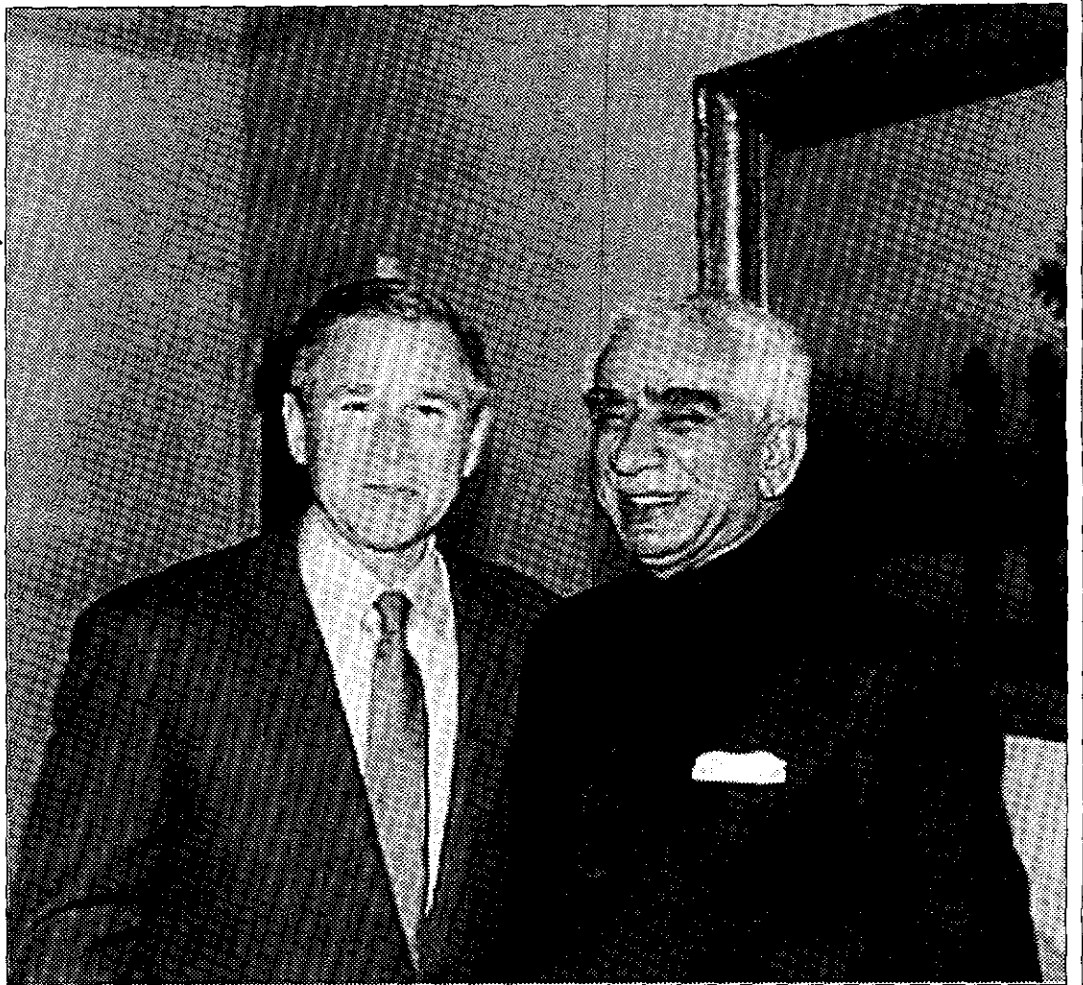
As India's response came on the eve of Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov's visit, some even wondered how Moscow, Delhi's "time-tested ally", would react. But Indian diplomats said Russia has also expressed satisfaction over the policy.

According to sources, much of the prompt support has to do with India's perception of the emerging Asian scenario.

Some sections fear that the national missile defence might trigger an arms race in South Asia, but South Block hopes it would lead to further isolation of China. After failing to get officially accepted as a nuclear power — the Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty restricts the number to five — India hopes its stand would establish it as a key world player and a responsible nuclear country.

What has made the policy acceptable to India is the US' stress on bringing about further cuts in its nuclear arsenal and removing them from a state of hair-trigger alert. For the past few years, India has been trying to garner support among key world players to de-alert nuclear weapons. The US had opposed the move.

The main problem is the new



Bush with Jaswant Singh when the foreign minister visited Washington. (PTI)

policy's linkage to the proposed national missile defence — which, in effect, is the Republican plan to build a defence shield to thwart incoming missiles carrying nuclear warheads from "rogue states".

What it also does is undermine the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 between the US and the former Soviet Union. Russia had earlier opposed the American move, but has softened considerably and shown signs of accepting the move if Washington is keen on putting it in place only after consulting with other countries.

The Indian foreign ministry statement also stresses on this aspect.

South Block officials said the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty is basically between two countries

and, if both are in favour of either improving or changing it, Delhi can hardly oppose the move.

Moreover, Delhi's stress has been on the US resolve to put the missile shield in place only after cooperation from other countries.

## Immature, says Cong

The issue caused ripples in domestic politics, too, with the Congress questioning the rush to welcome Bush's policy.

The party dubbed the government move "thoughtlessly premature and dangerously immature".

Former Union minister and AICC's head of foreign department K. Natwar Singh said the foreign ministry's reaction would not serve the country's interests in any way. "We want to empha-

size and caution the country that the acceptance of the package offered by Bush constitutes a decisive paradigm shift in nuclear policy and breaks the international consensus that has existed for decades," Natwar Singh said.

He added that the Congress alone has seen it fit to give a "certificate of approval and a testimonial to the new nuclear policy without any detailed study".

"The Congress is simply unable to appreciate the need for such a tearing hurry to respond publicly and officially on so sensitive a issue," he said, terming it as the "most irresponsible action in the international field since Independence."

THE TELEGRAPH

4 MAY 2001

119-12  
9/5  
FRIDAY, MAY 4, 2001

## PLAYING SECOND FIDDLE

INDIA'S UNCRITICAL ACCLAMATION of the new strategic 'vision' of the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, has only underlined the Vajpayee administration's all too eager willingness to jettison the right to strategic autonomy, if not also an independent foreign policy. By acquiescing in the emerging strategic agenda of the sole superpower, New Delhi finds itself embarrassingly alone among all the global powers and emerging players. Not only that. What New Delhi has failed to accomplish is to clarify how it can virtually adopt Mr. Bush's American agenda in regard to nuclear security and missile defences as India's own strategic vision. The agenda has not so far gained a pan-U.S. political consensus, either. Yet, the External Affairs Ministry's unmitigated endorsement of Mr. Bush's latest plans is in sync with the Vajpayee administration's track record of softening on India's strategic independence. A recent pattern of behaviour is illustrative of how New Delhi is beginning to relinquish its sense of autonomy. Witness official India's deafening silence on the basic issues of international morality in respect of the latest U.S.-China row over a spy plane or, indeed, New Delhi's diplomatic passivity about the raging conflict in West Asia involving Israel and the Palestinians.

The rights and wrongs of Mr. Bush's new thinking, spelt out in a policy speech on what is seen as an American national missile defence scheme, constitute a deeply divisive issue within the U.S. and outside it. The centrepiece will consist of a unilateral scale-down of the U.S.' nuclear arsenal and a parallel boost to the development and deployment of a space-age shield against mass-destructive warheads. The only novel aspect of Mr. Bush's ideas, which have been in focus for several months now, is his offer to consult the U.S.' allies and friends, ranging from the U.K. and France in Europe to India and Japan in Asia. The views of China and Russia, too, will be

sought, but Washington has bracketed them separately as the other countries concerned with its plans. New Delhi's alacrity in hailing Mr. Bush has much to do with its own spiralling sense of being a valued interlocutor of the new administration in Washington. Discernible for some time, too, are the signs, not always subtle, that the Vajpayee administration will like to cement ties with the U.S. to try and keep both China and Russia guessing about India's own options on the wider international stage. Official India's efforts to convince the U.S. of a need to isolate Pakistan cannot also be missed in this connection. Of course, New Delhi may have intended to send out signals about the freedom of its foreign policy manoeuvres in the present post-Cold War context. However, the objective reality can hardly be concealed: a move towards some form of strategic dependence on the U.S.

The External Affairs Ministry's commendation of the evolving Bush blueprint on a new global strategic architecture is regrettably bereft of any substantive references to India's own historic role in seeking to shape the global disarmament outlook. For obvious reasons, Rajiv Gandhi's efforts at advocating international nuclear disarmament did not advance the cause itself during his time. Yet, the sparks and fumes of the international debate on this issue were in some measure catalysed by India over the past decades. Noteworthy now is New Delhi's acceptance of the "strategic and technological inevitability" that the world should give up the theories of mutual assured destruction and embrace the idea of defensive protection from nuclear weapons. This theory, though, is still very much debatable, given that the required know-how has not yet been proven. So, arguable still is whether Mr. Bush's unilateral pledge of a reduced nuclear arsenal could lead to a "multilateral compact that results in an elimination of all nuclear weapons globally".

THE HINDU

4 MAY 2001



## Learning to Grow <sup>off penin</sup>

The noise being made in New Delhi over the Pakistan navy exercise with Bangladesh and Myanmar does not do credit to a nuclear weapons state, with ambitions to a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. For one thing, India does similar exercises with the neighbours of both these countries and second, such exercises do not in any way detract from Indian security. If the Indian reaction betrays a certain nervousness, it is because it brings out the persistent problem of New Delhi's handling of its smaller neighbours. There is no doubt that in trying to treat its smaller neighbours well, the decks are stacked against India. The problem is structural — India is bigger than all of them, barring China which in any case does not see itself as being part of South Asia. Second, all of them neighbour India and none have boundaries with each other. Looming even larger is India's cultural pull. At the benign level this generates the kind of resentment that many people in the world, including Indians, feel about the United States. But seen through another kind of prism, India and many things Indian become a threat that must be neutralised, if not destroyed. While the overwhelming mass of neighbours do not feel this way, there are elements in Pakistan, and to a lesser extent in Bangladesh and Nepal, whose animus towards India defines their politics. Though this appears as somewhat of a paradox, giant India's responses to its neighbours are tinged heavily by concerns related to security. This is what took India into East Pakistan in 1971, to Sri Lanka in 1987 and what triggered the blockade of Nepal in 1988-89. Recent evidence from Nepal and Bangladesh confirms that our neighbouring countries are being used by forces hostile to India.

Having said this, it is also clear that a wannabe superpower like India has little choice but to deal with the situation as it exists, and to do so with finesse. The 'baddies' must be neutralised, and the 'good guys' must triumph. One reason why New Delhi has not been able to do this is because it has simply not invested the intellectual and managerial effort this requires. The best and the brightest in our civil services would rather be handling non-jobs in Brussels, San Francisco and Geneva, rather than dealing with Kathmandu and Dhaka. Robert Frost said that good fences make good neighbours. But making fences that do not threaten anyone, but promote everyone's security, is hard work. Towards this end, India is not without assets. Growing economic clout, prowess in information technology and a vibrant culture make India a desired destination. What the government has to do is find ways of converting these into good feelings towards the country. New Delhi's handling of its neighbours has fluctuated between coddling, neglect and hostility. Problems are allowed to fester till they break out into sores. It took the Boraibari fiasco to get the ministry of external affairs to invite the Bangladeshis for talks. It took decades for New Delhi to learn how to deal with ethnically and linguistically different states within India, and in most cases that too was done after resentment gave rise to political forces that could not be ignored. Perhaps a similar approach could be followed in dealing with India's smaller, albeit at times difficult, neighbours.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

3 MAY 1991

# India backs US nuke strategy shift

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, May 2

INDIA HAS joined the US in going where no nuclear power has gone before. In a statement by the Ministry of External Affairs on Wednesday, India gave a qualified endorsement of President George W. Bush's decision to shift the US's nuclear strategy away from deterrence towards missile defence.

Bush announced the US's intention to push ahead with a national missile defence, even it meant terminating the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, in a speech in Virginia early on Wednesday. He also promised unilateral cuts in the US nuclear arsenal: America would erect a shield while simultaneously blunting its sword.

US National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice contacted Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh on Tuesday night to inform him of Bush's speech.

MEA today described the US President's speech as "highly significant and far-reaching," adding that Bush sought "to transform the strategic parameters on which the Cold War's security architecture was built."

New Delhi went on to endorse the stance. "India lauds the desire of the US to make a clean break with the past," especially from the "adversarial legacy of the Cold War".

However, India's support had qualifications. Abandoning deterrence would have to result in a world of reduced nuclear threat. "India believes there is a strategic and technological inevitability in stepping away from a world that is held hostage by the doctrine of MAD (mutual assured destruction) to a cooperative defensive transition that is underpinned by further cuts and a de-alert of nuclear forces."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

2 MAY 2001



40-1  
2/5

# India not surprised by U.S. line on Pak.

By C. Raja Mohan

**NEW DELHI, MAY 1.** India is not surprised by Washington's reluctance to designate the Lashkar-e-Taiba a terrorist organisation or put Pakistan in the dock as a state sponsor of terrorism.

There was no expectation here that the U.S. Government would go the full distance against Pakistan and terrorist organisations such as the Lashkar and the Jaish-e-Mohammed in its annual report on international terrorism.

Asked whether India was disappointed by the U.S. decision to hold back on naming terrorists and its sponsors in the subcontinent, a Foreign Office spokesman said, "the formulation of the report speaks for itself."

The U.S. has not formally designated the Lashkar and the Jaish foreign terrorist organisations but put them on a kind of watch list. It

had some blunt remarks about Pakistan's support to international terrorist activity.

Yet it is natural to have expected that the Republicans, with their strong ideological aversion to international terrorism, would call a spade a spade.

The guarded U.S. approach towards the Lashkar and Pakistan may reflect the political predilec-

**A gentle rebuke: Page 13**

tions of the Clinton administration rather than those of the current dispensation in Washington, diplomatic observers say.

It is understood here that many of the conclusions of the report were clinched during the last days of the Clinton administration, and the Republicans have had little time or scope to change the framework of the report.

The counter-terrorism experts in the U.S. have been pressing hard to name the LeT as a terrorist organisation and call Pakistan's bluff on supporting international terrorism.

But the "professionals" in the State Department, who are unwilling to face the political consequences of stating the truth on Pakistan and terrorism, have won this round narrowly, observers here say.

Once it is fully staffed and becomes familiar with the subcontinent, the new administration is bound to review all the evidence on terrorism in the region.

Though international cooperation in counter-terrorism is valuable, New Delhi is fully conscious of a simple fact — India will have to fight and win the war against terrorism on the basis of its own capabilities and not bank on others.

THE HINDU

2 MAY 2001

# MEA apathy behind border skirmish, says home official

By Bisheshwar Mishra  
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: A bare 6.1 km of undemarcated section of the 4,095 km India-Bangladesh border and "adverse possessions" and "enclaves" "could have been resolved decades ago but for the laid-back attitude of the ministry of external affairs (MEA)," a senior home ministry official told *The Times of India* on Monday.

"The survey of the 6.1 km, which exists in three patches, has to be conducted by the MEA. The responsibility for the survey, as also effecting any changes in the international boundary, is that of the MEA, which has held only one meeting for surveying in the past three years," he added.

As if responding to the home ministry's criticism, the external affairs ministry on Monday invited a delegation from Bangladesh to "discuss pending issues" relating to the border here next month. An external affairs ministry spokesman said all pending matters relating to the 1974 agreement on demarcation of the boundary were proposed to be discussed.

There are 111 exchangeable Indian enclaves in Bangladesh, totalling 17,158.12 acres, and similarly 51 exchangeable Bangladesh enclaves in India measuring 7,110.02 acres. This apart, there are 43 pieces of Indian land under Bangladesh in "adverse possession" and similarly 47 pieces of Bangladesh land under India's "adverse possession", sources said.

The dispute regarding the undemarcated land springs from original

land documents. While Bangladesh is citing a document of 1937, the Indian side is relying on land records of 1914 to sustain its claim.

Interestingly, the responsibility for the boundary in Bangladesh vests with that country's home ministry, but in India, the borders are entirely under the supervision of the MEA. The BSF is only in charge of protecting the borders. Any survey or change to be effected on the international border is the task of the MEA.

"MEA officials look forward to postings in Geneva rather than on the Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka desks," the home ministry official said. According to him, whenever some dispute arises or Bangladesh forcefully asks why the Indira-Mujib Accord of 1974 has not been implemented, the MEA weakly responds that "demarcation of the border has not been completed yet".

According to the official, there was no reason why the border dispute with Bangladesh could not have been resolved. The Indira-Mujib Accord clearly stipulates that all enclaves will merge with the country within which they are located and the population living there has the option of shifting out or joining the country they are in. Similar guidelines also exist to resolve the "adverse possession", he said.

Meanwhile, the BSF has launched an internal inquiry into the border skirmish. The inquiry will review the overall operation at both Pyrdiwah and Boraibari "to see what happened and how it happened", sources in the BSF said on Monday.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

115

# Delhi wary of Musharraf's visit to Myanmar

By Atul Aneja

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 27.** Concerned about the growing links between India and Myanmar, the Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, has decided to visit Yangon early next month. Gen. Musharraf is expected to reach the Myanmar capital on May 5. This is a rescheduled visit as the General had earlier planned to visit Myanmar in early January, prior to the visit there by the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh.

Government sources here say that there could be a strategic slant to the Musharraf visit as Islamabad is looking for a hold along India's eastern borders ever since it lost East Pakistan to Bangladesh. Not surprisingly, India will monitor this visit closely.

Pakistan, according to sources, is keen on establishing a "presence" in Myanmar. That can come by negotiating "commercial openings", which would allow it to send Pakistani nationals in the country for long durations, analysts here say. China, suspected of viewing Myanmar as a gateway for acquiring influence in the Bay of Bengal area, has mastered the art of exploiting commercial opportunities for promoting security goals.

For instance, China positioned its nationals in time-consuming infrastructure projects for construction of roads, railways, airfields and ports in Myanmar earlier. Beijing, among others, has developed Myanmar's Hainggyi base, constructed a rail link from Kalemyo to Pokakku and developed the airfields of Mandalay, Pegu and Yangon.

Similar intent by Pakistan, though obviously on a qualitatively much smaller scale, is bound to concern India. India realises that the presence of any forces in Myanmar, which are inimical to its interests, can have a negative impact on India's national security. Several areas of Myanmar, such as the Hukwang valley and the areas west of the Chindwin river, have been used as bases by Naga insurgents. An assured Pakistani presence in Yangon, therefore, can result in contacts which can be used for promoting insurgency along India's northeastern frontiers further.

Gen. Musharraf's visit is expected to lead to an expansion of military contacts between Islamabad and Yangon. Pakistan, is looking for an opening to sell its arms. In fact, Myanmar is not a new market for Islamabad as it has sold two consignments of

weapons and ammunition worth \$2.5 million in March-April 1999. Pakistan, which is familiar with Chinese weapons which it imports in large numbers, is also looking for tying up with Myanmar for the supply of spare parts. Like Pakistan, Myanmar also imports large quantities of Chinese military equipment.

Sources point out that of late Pakistan has been taking greater recourse to arms sales as levers for drawing diplomatic benefits. For instance, its military sales to Sri Lanka during the heat of an LTTE offensive has been a factor in bringing it closer to Colombo.

Given Pakistan's proximity to China, India will closely observe the extent to which the Myanmarese react to Islamabad's overtures during the Musharraf visit. As of now, the Myanmarese are keen to "balance" their close relations with China by forging strong ties with India.

The visit of General Maung Aye to India and the trip by Mr. Jaswant Singh for the inauguration of the strategic Tamu-Kalewa road link was interpreted here as a manifestation of this policy. Any deviation from this stance, during the Musharraf visit, is expected to activate India's security concerns.

THE HINDU

28 APR 2001

# BJP criticises Govt. on border incident

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119-13  
25/4

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 24.** A day after facing flak in Parliament for the handling of the incidents on the Indo-Bangladesh border, the Government continued to face criticism today — this time from the Bharatiya Janata Party.

At a meeting of its parliamentary party chaired by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, members expressed outrage over the barbaric and brutal manner in which 16 BSF jawans were tortured and killed by the Bangladesh Rifles and demanded stern action.

Some party MPs insisted that the Government take stringent steps to assuage the feeling of anguish over the incident and to ensure that those responsible for the mutilation of BSF jawans were punished.

The External Affairs and De-

fence Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, told the members that New Delhi had lodged a protest with Dhaka. He said the Government had responded promptly and got vacated Pyrdiwah which was occupied by the Bangladesh Rifles, the party spokesman, Mr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra, told correspondents after the meeting.

Mr. Jaswant Singh reiterated that there was no question of failure of intelligence and that the situation on the Indo-Bangla border was normal.

He said the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, had spoken to Mr. Vajpayee conveying her concern and assured a full investigation into all aspects of the incident, including mutilation of the bodies.

Party sources said some members were dissatisfied by the statement on the grounds that there should have been a tougher

action by the Government, especially in the wake of the manner in which jawans were killed.

Interestingly, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, did not speak, the sources said adding that the Prime Minister intervened briefly when members drew attention to contradictory reports on Sheikh Hasina expressing regret.

The members demanded adequate compensation to the next of kin of those killed. Mr. Jaswant Singh said the Government would keep in mind the sentiments expressed by the party MPs. On Monday, BJP MPs in the Rajya Sabha joined the House in criticising the Government for the manner in which the crisis was tackled with Mr. Shatrughan Sinha wanting to know how the Government could give a "clean chit" to the Dhaka even before an investigation was conducted.

THE HINDU

25 APR 2001

# Rattled Jaswant loses his cool as BJP MPs grill him

SHARAD GUPTA  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

For the second day today, the government faced flak over its handling of the border crisis from its own MPs, who so drilled home their dissatisfaction that External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh, who also holds additional charge of the Defence Ministry, lost his cool.

"What do you want? Do you think India should have bombed Bangladesh?", he's learnt to have said in reaction to the criticism at a BJP Parliamentary Party meeting.

Singh had earlier explained to MPs the sequence of events leading to the intrusion into Meghalaya by personnel of the Bangladesh Rifles and the logic behind India's restrained response.

Party MPs, unsatisfied with Singh's explanations, sought to know why the Government appeared to have buckled down before a tiny state like Bangladesh. "Had Bangladesh behaved in this manner with a strong country like the US, the reply would have been

devastating", one MP said, making the Minister lose his cool.

Interestingly, both Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Home Minister L. K. Advani were silent throughout the discussion.

BJP MPs also vent their spleen on being ignored during nominations to advisory committees to various Ministries. They complained



that most of the Telecom Advisory Committees had been stuffed with Communication Minister Ram Vilas Paswan's own men while none of the BJP MPs had been consulted even in their own constituencies.

"What pains us most is when in our area, nominees of our adversaries are appointed on such advisory committees", said a party MP. Each Ministry was funding a large number of NGOs, several of which were being run by BJP MPs' opponents, they complained. Vajpayee is learnt to have assured the MPs that he would tell Ministers to consult MPs of the concerned constituency - whichever party he may belong to - before appointing members on advisory committee in his area.

INDIAN EXPRESS

2 APR 2001

## Sangh stings Centre on border terror

FROM OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 23: Loud rumblings of protest are being heard within the Sangh parivar against the way the Centre has handled the brutal killing of BSF jawans on the Indo-Bangladesh border.

Bajrang Dal convener Surendra Jain, who took the lead by sending a letter to Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, said the government's "lukewarm response" could raise doubts about its competence in the minds of the people.

Jain urged Vajpayee not to allow his "liberal image" to be interpreted as a "sign of weakness" and demanded that Bangladesh should be "taught a lesson for its misdeed". He asked the government to "direct Dhaka" to stop allowing ISI militants to use Bangladesh as a base for anti-India activities.

Earlier in the day, Sangh parivar activists led by VHP president Vishnu Hari Dalmiya demonstrated outside the Bangladesh High Commission. They submitted a memorandum to the high commissioner, listing a series of demands.

Among them were punishment, in accordance with international law, to the guilty Bangladesh Rifles personnel, a personal apology to the families of the slain jawans and repatriation of all illegal Bangladeshi migrants.

After meeting the high commissioner, M.F. Mohammad, Dalmiya said: "We expressed our strong resentment over the recent incidents to him and demanded proper investigation from the Bangladesh authorities." The envoy reportedly assured that "proper action" would be taken against those found guilty.

THE TELEGRAPH

24 APR 2001

# Delhi lodges strong protest with Dhaka

Hasina govt. promises investigation into torture

By Seema Guha

The Times of India News Service and PTI  
NEW DELHI: India lodged a strong protest with Bangladesh on Saturday over the torture and mutilation of Border Security Force (BSF) personnel whose bodies were handed over on Friday.

Foreign secretary Chokila Iyer summoned Bangladesh high commissioner Mostafa Faroque Mohammed and protested against the inhuman treatment of the BSF men. A protest was also lodged about the destruction of property in Pyrdiwah village in the Meghalaya sector of the Indo-Bangladesh border. Property was destroyed even after the two governments had agreed through diplomatic channels to restore the status quo ante. Hours before news of the torture arrived, the external affairs ministry was congratulating itself on restoring peace within 48 hours of the incident.

Dhaka has promised to order an investigation into the torture. Ms Iyer also spoke to the Bangladesh foreign secretary about India's outrage. New Delhi has asked for the immediate return of the two BSF jawans who are being treated at a hospital in Dhaka. At the same time, India's high commissioner in Dhaka M.L. Tripathi met foreign minister Abdus Samad Azad and conveyed India's strong feelings about the mutilations. The minister assured him that his government would get to the root of the matter and find out why the BSF men had been tortured.

Although Dhaka has privately expressed regret at the incident, it is difficult for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to apologise publicly to New Delhi. This could be used by the opposition to hammer home the allegation that she is an 'Indian stooge'. Certainly, the ruling party does not want to give the opposition Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and its allies an opportunity to malign her ahead of national elections in June.

New Delhi is also convinced that Awami League government of Sheikh Hasina had at no point directed Bangladesh Rifles to 'provoke' India. However, the provocation has not been entirely one-sided.

According to guidelines signed by India and Bangladesh in 1975 following the Indira-Mujib pact, no new structure should be constructed from Zero Point to 100 metres on either side. The BSF in Pyrdiwah village had apparently done just that despite repeated protests from Bangladesh. Indian officials, both in home and external affairs, know this but are not ready to acknowledge it.

Pyrdiwah in Meghalaya is actually



Border Security Force personnel at the cremation ceremony of their colleagues at Prahinagar village in Tura, Meghalaya, on Saturday

which the BSF insists is just a corridor for help communication between its outposts, arrived in the early hours Monday morning physically to take possession of the village and obstruct further construction.

When the BSF in the Assam sector word of the BDR occupation of Pyrdiwah BSF patrol was sent, probably to the BDR. At the local level, a faraway border area, the local officers do pretty much what they please.

Although the BSF could be accused of doing what the BDR had done in Pyrdiwah, Bangladesh has to explain the BSF men were tortured and their bodies mutilated.



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because the team  
doesn't have a full-time  
coach.

The past weeks have  
seen practice after  
practice, fitness regimes  
alternating with rugby  
tactical sessions at the  
training camp at  
Bombay Gymkhana.  
"The training has been  
tough so far, but it will  
definitely help us when

we play the international  
tournament" says Akoijam Jeet  
Singh, from Manipal.  
Wishing them the very best!

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

22 APR 2001

# In the name of good diplomacy

By Achin Vanaik

140-12  
2/19

CONSIDER THE following behaviour by the overwhelming majority of our strategic community! The then U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton's visit to India last year is hailed as heralding a new era marked by U.S. recognition of India's "true worth and value" as friend and potential ally. However, the U.S. media's coverage is only a small fraction of that of its Indian counterpart to what is supposed to be a major turning point in U.S. foreign policy. Then comes the new Bush administration and Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, its Defence Secretary, disparages the Russian-Indian nuclear energy-related deals even referring to India as something of a 'rogue' state. Our strategic community in overwhelming majority begins proclaiming its deep dismay.

Then comes another turnaround. This same strategic community hails the 'wondrous' performance of our Foreign-cum-Defence Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, in Washington when the President, Mr. George W. Bush, broke protocol to personally escort him to the Oval Office. Incidentally, the U.S. media considered the visit of Mr. Jaswant Singh to be of so little consequence that its coverage was utterly insignificant even as it was being hailed in the Indian media as a dramatic recognition of India's importance in world affairs. That major reorientations in U.S. foreign policy do not go unnoticed or unrecognized in the U.S. media, certainly not in its most important sections fully *au fait* with what is going on in Washington, is not a fact that has been allowed to dim the euphoria in which the bulk of our 'foreign policy establishment' is basking. After all, didn't the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, tell our Foreign Minister that India had arrived at the table of world powers!

True, other countries at this high table such as France and Britain have average standards of living and military-nuclear prowess that India will never reach but are inconsequential actors on the world stage. Russia (despite its incredible decline over the last decade) has a military might and technological-scientific levels that India will never reach, but has been and will remain for a long time *hors de combat*. Chi-

na, much touted as an actual or future world power, is constantly on the defensive vis-a-vis the U.S. despite exercising much more influence in the U.S. than India does. On the one hand, the enormous influence of the economic-multinational-business lobbies in the U.S. prevented even a more China-baiting Republican Party from going gung-ho over the airplane crash issue. On the other hand, the Chinese had to settle for less than they hoped for by way of apology and can do nothing to stop U.S. surveillance flights near their borders nor hope for more than postponement of major arms supplies to

The fundamental flaw in the assumptions that underlie Indian foreign policy thinking and making today is not just an inadequate assessment of the implications of the enormous asymmetry of power between the U.S. and India but also the delusion that India has reached some distinctive stage of geo-political 'maturity' or 'authority' or 'power' whereby the U.S. is now in some way compelled to make adjustments in its own geo-strategic thinking that can only be more favourable to India. The U.S. concern about a rising Chinese power is usually taken as an additional factor that makes the change in

as seriously as it takes itself. What is most important about such an approach is not only that it pushes India to repeatedly 'adjust' to U.S. imperatives and all too often to accept U.S.-imposed terms on specific issues of bilateral or mutual concern, but that India then deludes itself that what is, in effect, near-surrender is actually good diplomacy and sensible exercise of national interest.

One of the most important and obvious examples of this is the U.S.' National Missile Defence (NMD) system. What about the following story as an example of twists and turns! We were first told post-Pokhran-II that India's bomb would promote nuclear disarmament because it would help chasten the behaviour and attitudes of the NWSs, above all the U.S. it didn't as the U.S. endorsed in principle the building of an NMD. We are now on the verge of a second nuclear age. If there was virtual unanimity amongst the Indian bomb lobby less than six months ago (before the Republican presidential victory in the U.S.) that this was detrimental to the global situation and should be opposed, now the 'adjustments' (by Indians not Americans) has begun. The new chorus has begun and it will grow stronger — India should not oppose the NMD or let it hamper Indo-U.S. relations, indeed we may gain by becoming a part of U.S. plans in this regard or in regard to regional Theatre Missile Defences (TMDs).

Since India can do nothing to stop the NMD/TMDs and can only irritate the U.S. by opposing it, even if it is official policy, keep quiet about it since India needs U.S. goodwill. Or better still, come around to participating in its construction. The point of course, is that the NMD is not simply aimed at China and Russia, it is above all the most arrogant form of U.S. nuclear unilateralism and dominance, the clearest expression of how much contempt it holds for even the strongest of the other nuclear powers and of how determined it is to play the 'geo-political game' as much as possible on its own terms. And this is the Washington mindset that New Delhi thinks it can manipulate, shape and persuade in its own 'national interest'!

***The Indian 'foreign policy establishment' takes itself too seriously. It has a grossly exaggerated sense of India's actual power and of its potential and promise.***

Taiwan. Germany, Italy, Japan and Canada all figure in G-8 summit meetings while India of course doesn't. But again, despite being at the economic high table and each of them having technological-military capabilities (and total GDP, not merely per capital GDP, higher than India as indeed does Brazil), none of them counts as any serious counterweight to the U.S. or as world players. Still, how satisfying it is to the egos of the members of our strategic community to be told that India is now at some high table of major global powers!

When will our strategic community once again begin to rail at some form of U.S. behaviour suggesting that it still hasn't woken up fully to the new importance of India? When exactly one cannot predict but that it will again happen we can take as certain. The basic reason for the exaggerated displays of both euphoria and dismay, is that the Indian 'foreign policy establishment' takes itself too seriously. It has a grossly exaggerated sense of India's actual power and of its potential and promise. This self-delusion existed before Pokhran-II but that event has greatly reinforced it. But then what else can our 'establishment' cling onto by way of plausible evidence of new-found Indian 'greatness' or 'importance'.

'geo-political circumstances' so opportune for India to become a world player. From this false understanding of the global situation certain lessons are then drawn.

The most important of which is that the U.S. 'needs' India just as India needs the U.S. Admittedly, there may be a difference in the nature and extent of their respective needs (and even this much is all too rarely admitted) but this is not of such a scale or kind as to cause serious problems of 'adjustment'. It then follows that if nonetheless there do emerge problems between the U.S. and India then these do not reflect fundamental conflicts or dilemmas but should be treated as misperceptions, misunderstandings or minor conflicts of interest where shorter-term considerations are being given excessive weight over more basic and longer term commonalities of interest. It is the job of good diplomacy to overcome these problems.

This is an approach that assures an excessive preoccupation with the nuances of diplomatic behaviour between Government representatives and guarantees that the Indian strategic community will from time to time be surprised and alarmed by forms, patterns and acts of U.S. foreign policy which show rather clearly that it does not (and sees no need to) take India

140-12  
2/19



# MEA summons Bangla envoy to protest intrusion

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 18: India on Wednesday expressed serious concern over what it described as "unwarranted and unprovoked" action of the Bangladesh Rifles which led to escalation of tension on Indo-Bangladesh border in the Meghalaya sector.

India lodged its strong protest with the Bangladesh high commissioner in New Delhi, Mr Mustafa Farouq Mohammed, who was called to South Block. New Delhi asked the Bangladesh government to convey local authorities in the "disputed area" to avoid use of force along the border.

Mr Farouq Mohammed held a meeting with joint secretary

(north) in the ministry of external affairs B.R. Shankar and was asked to ensure immediate vacation of the Pyrdiawh village held by the Bangladesh Rifles.

An official of the Indian foreign ministry said that Bangladesh has been told about the need for "restoration of the status quo and exercise of utmost restraint to defuse the tension."

The approach of the Indian government has been to work together with Bangladesh in defusing the situation in the spirit of mutual co-operation to ensure a peaceful atmosphere on the border, the official said.

India and Bangladesh have already set up a mechanism to resolve border dispute. India said

that Bangladesh should adhere to the arrangement instead of adopting an aggressive posture.

The official of the foreign ministry said that two sector-level meetings between India's Border Security Force and Bangladesh Rifles were held on April 16 and 18 which remained inconclusive.

India has around 4,000 km of border with Bangladesh. There is a stretch of around six to seven kilometres which has been identified as disputed by the two sides. In 1974, the two neighbours had entered into an agreement to resolve the border dispute. And, in December 2000 a JWG was set up for the demarcation of border and exchange of enclaves and territories in adverse positions.

THE ASIAN AGE

20 APR 2001

## Hardip Puri will be envoy to WTO

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The ministry of external affairs has confirmed that deputy high commissioner in London Hardip Puri is being appointed as the Indian ambassador to the World Trade Organisation in Geneva. A senior official, who did not want to be named, said, "Puri was selected because he was the most competent officer available for the job, and not because he belongs to this or that service."

His clarification was on account of reports suggesting that the appointment had been done at the cost of the Indian Administrative Service that 'traditionally' holds the job. According to the official, the current representative will be retiring on the job after having served there for seven years or so. *J. K. Puri 1994*

Puri's service record bears out the official's contention. *by J. K. Puri*

In his 27-year-old career in the Indian Foreign Service, he has put in some 15 years of experience with trade related issues, GATT and its successor body, the WTO. Between 1981-1984, he was member of the Indian delegation to the GATT in Geneva as the first secretary to the Permanent Mission of India there, serving for a while as the chairman of the subsidies committee.

Between 1988 and 1991, Puri was on deputation to the United Nations Development Programme in Geneva, working as a specialist assisting Asia-Pacific developing countries in their negotiations for the Uruguay Round of talks.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

18 APR 2001

# 'Polite' foreign secretary cut to size?

ST-8

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H BULA DEVI  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 17. — Has the "soft spoken, polite, cultured" first woman foreign secretary, Mrs Chokila Iyer, already been cut to size?

Her appointment seems to be jinxed. Since the time her name was announced, Mrs Iyer has been in a lot of controversy, not of her making.

The latest is that she won't handle the Gulf division. Officials said Mr KV Rajan, who recently retired as Secretary (East) and has been appointed Adviser to the MEA for six months, would continue to "handle" it.

The senior IFS official, Mr Rajan, handling East for long,

is an expert on Gulf. But, such an "arrangement" would have been unthinkable for any of the previous foreign secretaries in South Block, sources said. The whole issue came to light when the new foreign secretary did not accompany the Prime Minister during his visit to Iran. There was speculation on whether her wings had been clipped.

Foreign secretaries are supposed to advise the Prime Minister on foreign affairs. However during the visit to Iran, Mr Rajan accompanied the Prime Minister instead of Mrs Iyer. Not only that. During one of the initial routine briefings on the Prime Minister's visit, the correspondents were told that Mrs Iyer would give a detailed

briefing on the subject as the trip nears. That would have been the new foreign secretary's first Press briefing. But soon newspaper offices were informed that the Adviser would hold the briefing.

Some officials say, since Mr Rajan was retiring on 31 March and the Prime Minister's visit was scheduled from 10 April, the officials concerned perhaps took it for granted it would be Mrs Iyer briefing the Press, little knowing that Mr Rajan would take over as the Adviser. Though the Adviser's post had never existed, it didn't come as a surprise either, given Mr Rajan's long stint in the field of foreign affairs, specially an important area like Gulf.

THE STATESMAN

18 APR 2001

# Afghan oppn. hails PM's Teheran parleys

By Mahendra Ved  
The Times of India News Service

**NEW DELHI:** The Afghan opposition on Saturday welcomed Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's statement during his Iran visit that Taliban was "a threat to peace and stability" and urged a joint initiative by India, Iran and others in the region to help resolve the conflict.



**A.B. Vajpayee** The Teheran Declaration echoed the strong sentiments expressed a week earlier in Paris and Brussels where the European Parliament heard Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Masoud's offer to join an interim government with the Taliban for a six month period after which nationwide elections could be held as part of a political reconciliation.

However, Masoud wanted the world community to ensure that there is no role for Pakistan's serving and retired armed forces personnel, the Islamist groups who operate from there in the name of jihad and for Saudi fugitive Osama Bin Laden and his fighters

drawn from 16 nationalities.

This precondition was essential as Pakistan has been defying the UN-imposed sanctions to help the Taliban "with food, fuel, ammunition and weapons," Masoud told the French leadership and the European Parliament. He warned that bolstered by this support, the Taliban were readying for a "spring assault" in the next two weeks, "backed by Pakistan's air power."

Projecting himself as the moderate bulwark against Taliban extremism, Masoud said: "The shortest way to reach peace in Afghanistan is to stop Pakistan's interference." He said he was not giving up the military course, but was ready for a political dialogue, according to Afghan envoy Masood Khalili, just back from the European parleys. Masoud told the Europeans, shocked after the devastation of the Bamiyan Buddhas that Pakistan, while seeking to acquire a "strategic depth" in Afghanistan, had in fact gained "Islamic depth" by encouraging Islamist militant groups to fight in Kashmir and sending them to Chechnya.

At Brussels, Masoud disputed the popular perception that the Taliban controlled 90 per cent of the Afghan territory and claimed that

the ratio was actually 70-30. There were large pockets of organised resistance in the Kapisa-Parwan region north of Kabul, and in Badghis, Jozjan, Samangan and Faryab. The alliance also controlled the whole of Badakhshan in the north and parts of Kunar.

There is little doubt that with the melting of snow, Afghanistan, which witnessed major battles even during the winter, is heading for a military show-down. Both sides have prepared during this period, with the opposition setting up "diversionary bases." Masoud told the Europeans that his alliance, more cohesive than before, was confident of defending its territory and add to it, now that Gen. Ismael Khan was heading west in region between Herat and Badghis. Shia leader Karim Khalili, who won and lost Bamiyan last February, is also back in central region.

Another important leader, Abdul Rashid Dostum, exiled in Turkey and Iran for long, is also back in the fight to set up diversionary bases. According to Khalili, Dostum is meeting exiled president Burhanuddin Rabbani over the weekend before going to the Panjsher Valley to meet Masoud. The Dostum-Masoud relationship has in the past fluctuated, affecting the resistance against the Taliban.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

17 APR 2001

# India gains friendship of a vital Islamic regime

HT Correspondent  
Tehran, April 13

PRIME MINISTER A B Vajpayee's visit to Iran is a major success in the context of India's efforts to break new ground in its relationship with Muslim regimes that were once strong supporters of Pakistan.

Iran, along with Saudi Arabia and Turkey, were once steadfast friends of Islamic Pakistan, and refused to appreciate India's point of view for many years, but have now woken up to the

danger posed by fundamentalism.

With Pakistan's complicity in the rise of the Taliban, these Muslim nations have been forced to reassess their security concerns.

Ironically, Islamic regimes now find secular India an important partner in regional stability and combatting extremism.

If Iran or Saudi Arabia are worried about Kabul's role in drug-trafficking and rise of fundamentalism in the Muslim

world, India has made no secret of the Pakistan-Afghanistan nexus in Kashmir as an example of the shape of things to come in the name of *ihad*.

India decided to engage important Muslim countries as bulwark against cross-border terrorism when it realised that the world concern was growing even though its Kashmir problem was decades old.

In pursuance of this approach, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh visited Saudi Arabia recently and

convergence of views between an Islamic regime and Indian Government in the cause of stability and peace in the region.

A feather to Vajpayee's cap during the trip was that his persuasive manners charmed even a hardliner like Iran's supreme spiritual leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

Vajpayee was more than pleased when the Ayatollah wished him success in his endeavour to bring peace in Kashmir and praised his efforts

as a leader of the coalition to address the problems of various sections of India, particularly the Muslims.

Khatami, who is popular and most fancied to win the next month's presidential elections, went a step further to conclude that Iran supported India's efforts to ward off external interference in its internal affairs by those claiming to speak for the rights of the minorities. "Muslims in India are first citizens of their country," Khatami pointed out.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 APR 2001

14 APR 2001

# Atal downplays Iran bonhomie threat to Pak

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

Tehran, April 13: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee tried to allay Pakistan's fears by clarifying that improvement of bilateral ties between India and Iran was not "at the expense of any third country", nor was it intended to drive a wedge in Iran's existing relations with other countries.

Summing up his four-day visit to Iran as "very successful", Vajpayee was, however, quick to emphasise that the depth of Indo-Iranian relations is such that it automatically elevates the bilateral ties to a "special position".

During his "fruitful" discussion with the Iranian leadership, Vajpayee and Iranian President Seyyed Mohammad Khatami initiated the "path breaking" Tehran Declaration, which, among other things, expresses grave concern over the rise of fundamentalism and terrorist forces in the region and comes down heavily on governments sponsoring terrorist groups. The signal towards Pakistan could not be missed.

Vajpayee's emphasis on India's secular credentials and his assertion that Islam was a "part and parcel" of India for more than 1,000 years had predictably made Islamabad nervous about the growing

ties between India and Iran. "There is no truth in the view that we are trying to drive a wedge between them," Vajpayee said when asked about Pakistan's reaction that his visit to Iran was aimed at breaking Islamabad's ties with Tehran.

"It is not directed at a third country nor do we intend to spoil Iran's relations with someone else. But the depth of Indo-Iranian relations gives it a special status. Moreover, the Iranian leadership has stressed that India and Iran have a strategic role to play to maintain peace in the region," the Prime Minister said.

Vajpayee also had a tête-à-tête with Iran's supreme spiritual leader Ayatollah Khamenei. Though Vajpayee did not give details, he informed that Khamenei had given his blessings to the initiative that he and Khatami had taken to strengthen bilateral ties.

This is Vajpayee's second visit to Iran. He had visited the country in 1978, as foreign minister in the Janata Party government. "But since then the Islamic Revolution had taken place and had fundamentally changed Iranian politics and also left a strong impact on the country's economic and cultural sphere," he said.

He, however, said nothing



AB Vajpayee with Cabinet colleagues at a press meet in Tehran. (PTI)

could change the indomitable spirit of Iran and the country was trying to move forward despite several hurdles. He laid special emphasis on the historical ties between the two sides and expressed support for Khatami's initiative to have a worldwide "Dialogue Among Civilisations".

When it was pointed out that the historical ties he was referring to speaks about the ancient Persian culture, while the present regime in Iran was a product of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Vajpayee clarified that there was no contradiction between the two.

"We have to accept reality and work for a better and stronger relationship keeping these changes in mind," he added.

Vajpayee said Kashmir came up during the discussions and he explained India's position. He said India is aware of the steps taken by Iran to restore peace and pointed out that the Iranian leadership supported his Lahore bus journey.

The Prime Minister said developments in Afghanistan also came up for discussion.

Referring to the controversy over the proposed gas pipeline between Iran and India, Vajpayee

said the two sides were exploring all aspects and keeping options open to ensure that the supply was long-term, cost effective and takes care of Delhi's security concerns.

"If we had cordial relations with Islamabad, perhaps the land route could be the best option. But Iran is aware of our concerns," Vajpayee said. "Iran has a huge quantity of oil and natural gas and India is an energy-hungry nation. They are keen to sell their product and we are ready to buy it.

We will work out the best deal keeping these factors in mind," he added.

# Vajpayee meets the Ayatollah, Taliban furious

Shekhar Iyer  
Tehran, April 12

SELDOM SEEN in public but known by his unspoken authority, Iran's most powerful man met Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in his high-security mansion in the heart of Tehran today. Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, who is revered next only to the late Imam Khomeini, the father of the 1979 Revolution, didn't need to be introduced to the visitor. As Vajpayee stepped into his abode, Beit-e-Rah bari, the 62-year-old Ayatollah recounted his days in Vajpayee's constituency Lucknow — one of the most important centres of the Sha faith — which he visited as a young cleric in 1981.

The Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Brajesh Mishra and Minister of State Omar Abdullah accompanied him in his 30-minute meeting with the spiritual leader, who wrote *Role of Muslims in the Independence Struggle of India* two decades ago. Khamenei enquired after Vajpayee's health and conveyed his best wishes to the people of India. The Prime Minister in turn expressed happiness at the success of his Iran trip.

The Ayatollah visited India in February 1981 as a member of the Revolutionary Council. He met Indira Gandhi in New Delhi and also went to Hyderabad, where he met P V Narasimha Rao.

He was the former President of the Islamic Republic for eight years (1981-1989) before he became the Supreme Leader

## Talibanspeak

AFGHANISTAN'S TALIBAN militia on Thursday criticised Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee for describing them as a "threat" to regional stability, accusing him of "hatching conspiracies" to destabilise the region. **AFP, Kabul**

after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in June 1989.

Khamenei's strength is, he was handpicked by Ayatollah Khomeini as his successor as he was one of his favourite disciples. At a time when a section of the leadership is opposed to the pace of reforms in Iran under President Mohammed Khatami, Khamenei plays vital role in balancing the various sections of the ruling class. With the presidential elections due next month, all eyes are on President Khatami seeking a second term. Khamenei's word will be final in any arbitration to decide the winner.

Vajpayee's talks with Khamenei today underscored India's willingness to engage the entire Islamic leadership of Iran to underscore India's sincerity in the efforts to present itself as Iran's best friend.

Khamenei has faced terrorism in all its fury. On June 27 1981, there was an attempt on his life while he was delivering a sermon as a time-bomb went off. A widely acknowledged theological scholar, Khamenei is the best face of Iran's modernism as well as the symbol of the Islamic Revolution.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

13 APR 2001

# Vajpayee lauded for communal amity

HT Correspondent  
Tehran, April 11

IRAN HAS shed its post-Babri demolition fears about the safety of Muslims in India. Iranian President Mohammed Khatami gave a pleasant surprise to Prime Minister A B Vajpayee last night by praising him for maintaining communal harmony in India.

During one-to-one talks, Khatami, also told Vajpayee that Iran was totally opposed to international terrorism in the name of religion. He said the Muslims in India would have to consider themselves as the citizens of the country first.

Speaking during the delegation-level talks, the pro-reformist leader said different communities of India were able to live in peace and work for progress because of Vajpayee's leadership. Khatami referred to Vajpayee's commitment to secularism and his constant endeavour to address the problems of all communities in India.

The Iranian leader's compliment to Vajpayee marked a significant transition in his country's perception of India since the Babri Masjid's demolition in 1992. Iran was among the Muslim countries that had vehemently protested against the destruction of the dispute structure at Ayodhya. In 1993, then Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao had even



Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Iranian President Syed Mohammad Khatami at a Press conference in Tehran on Tuesday.

undertaken a visit to Iran to convince its leaders about India's secularist traditions.

By praising Vajpayee's secularist credentials, Khatami conveyed to all concerned, particularly other Muslim nations, that Iran was opposed to any evaluation of India on the basis of perceived discrimination of religious minorities.

The 58-year-old cleric, who is popular among the youth, particularly among women, has been articulating the need for moderation and justice to all sections of the society under the Islamic dispensation in his country.

Khatami, who is waging a protracted battle with hard-liners in Iran, has been telling his countrymen to avoid excesses. "Today,

a revolutionary person is one who pays attention to the Constitution and only moderation and justice would help Iran attain its goal," he said. Indian officials said Khatami's praise of Vajpayee and his emphasis on moderation reflected of Iran's deep appreciation of the Indian Government's efforts to address the problems of minorities.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 APR 2001



# India and the Islamic world

By C. Raja Mohan

HD-12

**T**HE PRIME Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's on-going visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran brings into bold relief one of the more exciting aspects of India's current foreign policy — a conscious effort to engage the key nations of the Islamic world. Mr. Vajpayee's visit to Iran follows the fruitful trip to Saudi Arabia by the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, in January — the first ever by an Indian Foreign Minister since Independence. The Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, will set out one of these days to Turkey, which could also turn out to be a politically productive journey.

The wooing of these three significant West Asian nations at the highest political level in such a short time span highlights the intensity of the current Indian political thrust towards the Islamic world. It also reveals the breadth of the diplomatic blitzkrieg, for no three countries could be as divergent ideologically as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey.

Saudi Arabia is a monarchy and deeply conservative in its religious orientation. Iran has a unique political system that is at once a "republic" and strongly Islamic; and it is a state created by a popular revolution against a monarchy. And Turkey is a republic that is determined to preserve its secular character at any cost against all attempts to Islamicise the state.

The Indian *pas de deux* with Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia is only one small slice of the Indian rediscovery of the Islamic world stretching from the Maghreb on the western fringes to Indonesia and Malaysia on the eastern edge. President Bouteflika of Algeria was the chief guest at this year's Republic Day celebrations; Mr. Vajpayee has recently been in Jakarta and he will travel to Kuala Lumpur in the coming weeks. There have been an unending stream of other visitors from Arab and Islamic nations to India in the last few months, and Mr. Jaswant Singh has travelled to many Arab nations including such important ones as Egypt and Syria recently. Never before has Indian diplomacy seen such an expansive engagement with the Islamic world.

That this deliberate cultivation of the Islamic world should come from a Government in New Delhi widely viewed in

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**What India is trying to do is transcend the Pakistan question and find ways to build mutually beneficial political and economic relationships with key Islamic states.**

the world as Hindu nationalist is perhaps one of the more interesting ironies of India's external relations. There is no question that the foundation for India's activism in West Asia was laid during Mr. Narasimha Rao's tenure as Prime Minister. Driven by the imperatives of the post-Cold War world and the requirements of internal economic reform, the Rao Government began the reorientation of Indian diplomacy towards the Islamic nations. The Vajpayee Government, in the last three years, has given it a robustness that was badly needed.

The current outreach to the Islamic world is marked by four important conceptual shifts in Indian foreign policy. The first is the transition from an ideological approach to a pragmatic one. A major determinant of India's engagement of the Islamic world in the past has been the idea of third world solidarity. The underlying principles of the non-aligned fraternity — anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism — made India more comfortable in dealing with those who were willing to mouth anti-Western slogans, and endorse thundering resolutions against the North, read the United States and the West. This verbal self-hypnosis of non-alignment also meant, somewhat unfortunately, that New Delhi had no time for some very important countries in West Asia. Nothing else can explain the Indian neglect of Saudi Arabia and Turkey. In its ideological approach to the region, India also preferred to deal with "secular republics" rather than "conservative shiekdoms". This differentiation has largely become irrelevant, as many of the secular republics have degenerated into authoritarian regimes while some conservative monarchies have kept up with the times by attempting cautious political liberalisation.

The "third worldism" of India also meant a gross under-estimation of the

contradictions within the Islamic world and the enunciation of such simplistic formulations that all the problems in the region were because of intervention by the great powers. India tended to proclaim one neat answer to all the security dilemmas of the Islamic world — great powers should just get out of the region. From that endearing political naivete, India has now come to appreciate the importance of building a credible coalition of great powers and regional actors to ensure the security of the weak local regimes against the strong and venal.

Shaking off the past ideological prejudice addresses only one half of India's problem in dealing with the Islamic world. The other half relates to India's past defensiveness in relation to those espousing ideological causes in West Asia. India is beginning to appreciate that even those who wear the most tinted religious glasses in the Islamic world have a powerful streak of pragmatism that places national interest above ideology.

A second important transition in Indian policy is on the economic front — from the mercantilism of the past to the quest for deeper economic integration. In the past, India's commercial policy towards the region had two elements — figuring out the best possible deals on oil purchases and counting the value of remittances from Indian expatriate labour in the Gulf. India is now talking about "energy security" that looks beyond buyer-seller relationships to a long-term integration of the hydrocarbon sectors and pipelines that calls for more enduring energy linkages. More fundamentally, India has begun to appreciate that peace and prosperity in the Gulf and the Subcontinent are inextricably intertwined.

Third, while trade in energy and commerce in general will provide the sinews of an enduring partnership between India and the Islamic world, New Delhi is dis-

covering a new common ground with the key nations of the Islamic world on the political front — support for political moderation and opposition to religious extremism. From secular Algeria and Turkey to deeply religious Saudi Arabia and Iran, today one single threat looms large in the Islamic world. It is the rise of new religious fanaticism and extremism that threatens peace and regime stability in large parts of the Islamic world. This has provided a huge opportunity for India to make common cause with a wide range of Islamic countries to support political moderation and oppose international terrorism. The rise of the Taliban in the recent years has sharpened the prospects for a new political convergence between India and as diverse a group of Islamic nations as Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Finally, the biggest transition has been India's handling of the Pakistan factor in dealing with the Islamic world. In the past, India was peeved and put off by those countries that supported Pakistan in its conflicts with India, in particular over Kashmir. India has shunned for decades those nations which it saw as pro-Pakistan. For example, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran were all seen earlier as being too close to Pakistan. But today, India is reaching out to these nations without a reference to the Pakistan factor.

India's recent engagement of the Islamic world has often been misrepresented as a strategy to cut Pakistan off from its traditional allies and friends. That is farthest from the truth. What India is trying to do is transcend the Pakistan question and find ways to build mutually beneficial political and economic relationships with key Islamic states.

India no longer objects to the deep ties between Pakistan on the one hand and states such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey on the other. But India believes there is enough political and economic business that it can do with these countries without demanding an end to their ties with Pakistan. This new self-assurance and pragmatism are likely to bring significant strategic dividends to India in its engagement of the Islamic world.

THE HINDU  
12 APR 2001

## Delhi open to pipeline through Pak

FROM OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 9: On the eve of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Iran visit, India today said all options for the proposed Indo-Iranian gas pipeline, including an overland route through Pakistan, are being explored by Delhi and Tehran.

"Cost-effectiveness and security for long-term supply of gas from Iran to India are the two main aspects which are being looked into by Delhi and Tehran jointly," a senior foreign ministry official said. But he added that the pipeline was "purely a bilateral agreement... and Pakistan is not in it".

Pakistan chief executive Pervez Musharraf had recently said his government was willing to allow its territory to be used for the proposed pipeline and also promised to ensure the project's security. The stress on bilateral agreement is a hint that Islamabad's assurance has impressed neither Delhi nor Tehran.

The two sides are planning to involve foreign oil companies and probably form a consortium, thus making Pakistan's territorial commitment more binding.

"Both India and Iran were in touch with international private firms to explore the various options and trying to educate themselves about them," a foreign ministry official said.

The two sides will also have detailed talks on other economic spheres. As a large delegation of Indian businessmen will be present at the time of the Prime Minister's visit, a framework arrangement for closer cooperation between the chambers of commerce of the two countries is being talked about.

THE TELEGRAPH

10 APR 2001

# From U.S. to Iran: an Indian rope trick?

By C. Raja Mohan

ND-13 9/7  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 8. From the United States to Iran! If the acme of diplomatic skill is about managing irreconcilable contradictions and profitably engaging two nations that are daggers drawn, India will be demonstrating some of that capability this week.

Wrapping up a visit that promises to take India's relations with the U.S. to a new high, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, is heading straight to Iran to join the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's party which arrives there on Tuesday.

Iran has long described the U.S. as *shaitan-e-buzurg*, or the Great Satan; and "Death to America" remains a popular, if somewhat muted, slogan of the conservative forces in Iran. Since the Islamic revolution there in 1979, Iran figured at the top of Washington's list of rogue states — now more politely called the "states of concern".

Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Singh will be performing this week the diplomatic equivalent of the famed Indian rope trick. After proclaiming a "natural alliance" with the U.S., India will be declaring a "strategic partnership" — or choose any other phrase you like — with Iran in promoting regional stability.

Is India engaged in pointless verbal gymnastics with the U.S. and Iran? No. Its efforts to create a common ground, separately, with the two adversaries is indeed genuine. Despite the huge divergence separating the world's sole superpower from the dominant power in the Persian Gulf, it is only natural for India to pursue its national interests with both.

New Delhi is not alone in attempting a complex balancing act among its competing interests. So are Teheran and Washington. All three are groping for a way forward in the extremely fluid strategic environment of the Gulf and the Subcontinent.

India is not the only one adept at diplomatic sophistication that tries to massage the circle into a square. An equally old civilisation, Iran has a more formidable reputation than India in finessing ambiguities and shifting effortlessly between different levels of rationality.

The U.S. will certainly not claim to be an ancient civilisation — references to which will abound during Mr. Vajpayee's visit to Iran next week. But as the world's foremost power and the principal external player in the Gulf

and the Middle East, the U.S. has more experience than anyone else in handling diverse interests and the contradictions among them.

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All indications are that the U.S. is reviewing its policy towards the Gulf, and may come up with a new line on Iran in the coming months. Over the last couple of years, the Clinton Administration had moved somewhat gingerly in finding a political opening towards Iran.

The American initiative was a response to the new direction in which the President, Syed Mohammed Khatami, and his reformist band have tried to steer Iran since his landslide victory four years ago.

Like the ping-pong diplomacy between the U.S. and China three decades ago, Iran and the U.S. have allowed wrestling matches and an occasional game of soccer between their teams. Diplomacy of the Track-II kind has been active between the two countries.

While success has been elusive, neither side has given up. For the U.S., Iran remains the strategic prize in the Greater Middle East. Lo-

## DIPLOMATIC NOTEBOOK

ated at the confluence of the Subcontinent, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and West Asia, Iran is at the core of the volatile and oil rich world.

For Khatami, a *modus vivendi* with the U.S. is critical for the success of his agenda of modernising Iran and realising its full economic and strategic potential.

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When it moves towards Iran, the Bush Administration may be far more decisive. Its leading lights take pride in being realists. At the top of the heap in Washington today are a number of oil men, including the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush, himself. If there is a political establishment that understands the geopolitics of energy it is the Bush Administration.

And within the Bush team, there is no one better placed than the Vice-President, Mr. Dick Cheney, to argue against the futility of continuing American sanctions against Iran. Mr. Cheney today enjoys a political clout in the Administration that few Vice-Presidents ever have in the U.S.

9-f. p. 11  
When he was the head of Haliburton, one of the important American energy companies, Mr. Cheney lobbied hard against American sanctions on Iran. Referring to "my favourite hobby horse", the question of unilateral sanctions, Mr. Cheney said in a speech in 1998, "they almost never work".

Mr. Cheney's old friends in the National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC), a lobbying group for free trade, wrote a letter last week to Congressmen urging them to review the effectiveness of the current sanctions against Iran before deciding to extend them further.

The Iran-Libya Sanctions Act of 1996, under which the U.S. oil companies have been barred from doing business with Iran, is scheduled to expire on August 5, 2001.

"The diplomatic and commercial costs of these sanctions has been high and their impact on relevant Iranian policies has been minimal," wrote the president of the NFTC, Mr. William A. Reinsch.

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Many Americans are convinced that the Clinton policy of isolating both Iraq and Iran has been a failure. The on-going review of U.S. policy in the Gulf will certainly ask the question: who is the principal adversary — Iraq or Iran?

If the answer is Iraq, things might begin to happen between Washington and Teheran. Looking for various options on ousting the Iraqi leader, Mr. Saddam Hussein, from power, Washington has been reaching out to Iraqi dissident groups abroad.

If you are looking for straws in the wind about the future U.S.-Iran relations, here is one. An influential Iraqi dissident group, based in Iran, said on Saturday it would now welcome U.S. moves to depose Mr. Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Mohammad Hadi of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq said his group was now "more realistic" and would be ready for direct talks with the Bush Administration. The group is believed to have some following among Shiite Muslims who form the majority in Iraq.

In the past the group was opposed to cooperation with the U.S. But now Mr. Hadi says, "We are ready to talk with anybody in our efforts to get rid of Saddam, including the United States".

THE HINDU

9 APR 2001

## Jaswant in Washington amidst U.S.-China spat

By Chidanand Rajghatta  
The Times of India News Service

WASHINGTON: External affairs minister Jaswant Singh's arrival in Washington on Thursday night for the first ministerial-level bilateral meetings with the Bush administration could turn out to be fortuitously timed because of the opportunity it provides to define India's space in the geo-strategic scheme of things amid the ongoing U.S.-China spat.



Jaswant Singh

India's place in the Asian security matrix has been the subject of animated debate in Washington in recent months. There is one school of thought, mostly in the U.S., that is pushing for New Delhi to be cultivated as a counterweight to an increasingly bellicose China. Another line of thinking believes that American aggressiveness is driving India, China and Russia into an informal security alliance. Which way the cards fall, or whether there will be

an entirely new construct, is something this visit could lay the ground for.

New Delhi has remained silent so far on the on-going U.S.-China spat. But a typical developing world view is that the U.S. has got its come-uppance for its hard line and in-your-face patrolling of the world's skies and sea-lanes.

Sub-continental scholars point out though that India and the U.S. had a history of cooperating against China before Henry Kissinger put an end to it in 1972. Between 1962 and 1971, the U.S. snooped on China using airbases and listening posts in India, says Sumit Ganguly, Professor of Asian Studies at the University of Texas in Austin. "The two sides could resume it without fanfare if they want to, but my sense is the people in New Delhi are petrified of offending China," Prof Ganguly said in an interview.

While petrified may be a strong word, interviews with Indian officials suggest that they are indeed chary of being drawn into the counterweight business. "China is our neighbour and we have to live with them," one official remarked, be-

fore launching into a lengthy disquisition about the dangers of being an American lackey.

The long-held Indian view is that a country with an independent foreign policy and mindset will gain no percentage by allying with the U.S. "Look at Britain, Japan, Australia...you think any of them have an independent, self-respecting foreign policy? Can you ever imagine India going down that path?" One Indian military official asked privately.

However, many American lawmakers and scholars have increasingly begun to write panegyrics about India, its democratic credentials, and its promising economic profile, while arguing for a strategic relationship with New Delhi. Strangely, this agenda is being pushed far more by hard-line Republicans.

In a recent opinion in the conservative *Washington Times*, foreign policy scholar Richard Fisher argued that the Bush administration ought to go beyond the secondary issues like Pakistan and Kashmir and scrap sanctions while forging a new relationship with India.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

6 APR 2001

# Vajpayee carries millennium deal from US to Iran

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

*9.4.2001*  
*1-8 3/4*

**New Delhi, April 2:** Barely a year after inking the Millennium Declaration with the US, India is bracing itself to sign the Teheran Declaration with America's *bete noire*, Iran, to signal their growing closeness and intent to work together.

The declaration is likely to be signed at the end of Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's three-day visit to Iran starting April 10. The document will sum up the visit and draw up benchmarks — bilateral, regional and global — the nations want to achieve together.

Delhi is aware of the strained relations between Teheran and Washington. Having built up a good rapport with the US, it is now keen to develop a strategic relationship with Teheran, a key country in the Persian Gulf.

With the Cold War having ended and the Taliban threatening to destabilise the region, India and Iran are keen on a relationship that will be mutually beneficial.

During his Iran visit, Vajpayee is slated to hold wide-ranging talks with President Syed Khatami and other senior members, call on Ayatollah Khomeini and address the Majlis. He is also likely to visit Shiraz, the centre of old Persian culture.

An important square in Shiraz is likely to be named after Maulana Azad. A few years ago, Iran had organised a seminar on Azad's contribution to Persian language and literature. While naming the square after him is an

attempt to pay tribute to his contribution, it also aims at establishing a bond with India.

Vajpayee's visit is significant in that he will be the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Iran in nearly nine years. In the interim, there have been senior delegation-level exchanges, including one in 1995 by then Iranian President Rafsanjani. But no Prime Minister has visited Iran since P.V. Narasimha Rao in 1993.

Vajpayee is travelling to Iran at a time when most key world players, including several major Western nations, are re-assessing their policy vis-a-vis the country. The Prime Minister's trip has, however, been scheduled after foreign minister Jaswant Singh's meeting with US secretary of state Colin Powell between April 5-7. At the Washington meeting, the West Asia situation and how the two sides can maintain the region's security is likely to come up for talks.

Iran controls the passage of over 20 per cent of the world's petroleum traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. It is also one of the largest producers of natural gas in the world and India is one of its biggest consumers.

The two sides have been negotiating on how to ferry Iranian natural gas to India. Though one option is to lay a pipeline through Pakistan, Delhi is not willing. Other options include transporting the gas through a deep-sea route avoiding Pakistan's exclusive economic zone or getting it shipped from Bandar Abbas as liquefied natural gas.

THE TELEGRAPH

- 3 APR 2001

# India likes Europe, but loves the U.S.!

By C. Raja Mohan 110-13

37A  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 2. Is Indian diplomacy too preoccupied with the United States to pay serious attention to other key players in the world such as Europe? This is a complaint one often hears from European diplomats based in New Delhi.

The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, who will be in Europe for the next few days en route to the U.S. will get to hear this sentiment from his interlocutors on the Continent.

The Europeans will also be muttering about India's long-term intentions — whether New Delhi wants to create a "multipolar world" with Brussels or build on what the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, had called the prospects for a "natural alliance" with Washington.

The charge that it loves the U.S. more than Europe might ring true this week as India plays host again to Mr. Bill Clinton who is returning tomorrow to rekindle his romance with India. New Delhi will also be focussed on the talks later this week in Washington between Mr. Singh and the national security team of the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush.

Mr. Clinton is no longer the headman of the global village. But his travels in India — from Bhuj in Gujarat to Rampur in Uttar Pradesh, with Mumbai, Kolkata and New Delhi

thrown in between — are guaranteed saturation coverage; far more than any European head of state can expect.

Mr. Singh's important conversations in Europe will be consigned to the inside pages of newspapers, while his preliminary engagement with the Bush administration will be on the front pages.

The Foreign Office will certainly protest the charge that it prefers the U.S. to Europe and will point to the current intensive engagement with Europe. In fact just this week Europe will be high on India's diplomatic agenda. The Foreign Secretary, Mr. Loic Hennekine, is here for regular political consultations with his Indian counterpart, Ms. Chokila Iyer.

The Foreign Office mandarins will also refer to Mr. Singh's stopover tonight in Copenhagen for a couple of days to promote bilateral ties with Denmark.

From Copenhagen, Mr. Singh will travel to Stockholm for a ministerial meeting with the European Union troika. Sweden currently holds the E.U. presidency. The two sides will review progress in the relationship since the first India-E.U. summit in Lisbon, Portugal last June, and prepare for the next one in India later this year.

The E.U. is certainly India's largest trading partner. In 1999 the trade with the E.U. was nearly \$21 billion compared to \$12 billion with the U.S. The E.U. may matter more in

economic terms; but India remains exuberant about the future political relationship with the U.S.

The Europeans will have to fight hard to neutralise the advantages the U.S. enjoys here — the English language, historical influence of the Anglo-Saxons, the power of the Indian-American community, and the attractions of the American way of life.

Given its position as the sole superpower, and the huge untapped potential of Indo-U.S. relations, Washington is likely to remain the number one priority for Indian foreign policy. Further, no nation can shape India's security environment — for good or bad — more than the U.S.

There will be no need for Mr. Singh to spell out these basic realities to his European interlocutors. But one hopes he is able to convince them of the great importance India attaches to the European connection, and has some new ideas on deepening the relationship with Brussels.

If Europe wants to be loved in India, it needs to get ahead of the U.S. on India's core security concerns — advanced technology transfers, unambiguous condemnation of the sources of terrorism in the subcontinent, and a willingness to acknowledge New Delhi's stabilising role in the Asian balance of power. Europe cannot tail America on these issues and yet expect a higher political reckoning in New Delhi.

THE HINDU

3 APR 2001

# Govt. is upset over the leak of Chokila's circular

By Seema Guha

**NEW DELHI:** The circular sent out by foreign secretary Chokila Iyer instructing Indian missions abroad how to tackle the Tehalka fall-out has created quite a stir in the external affairs ministry. The question being asked is not the propriety of sending out the circular, but how it was leaked to the media.



A.B. Vajpayee

The Vajpayee government, already suffering from a siege mentality, is out to get to the bottom of the issue. It wants to find out who leaked the story and take appropriate action against the person.

A news story from Islamabad published in *The Hindu* on Monday, quoted the for-

ign ministry instructions to the high commission on the line to take when questions were asked on the bribery scandal. The government instructions were to point to the fact that no actual deals were struck and that an inquiry had been ordered.

Both retired and serving officials of the ministry say it is not unusual to send out these instructions. Successive governments have done it, whenever the stability of the party or alliance in power was in doubt. "It is absolutely legitimate," says a senior diplomat. "Our foreign missions have to be given the official line on such issues, because they will have to tackle queries from the host governments, as well as journalists," the diplomat said.

"Considering that a defence minister had to step down, the railway minister and the minister of state for external affairs walked out of the NDA coalition, ques-

tions about the government's stability will arise. There is nothing wrong on missions being told how to tackle these thorny questions," an official said. "The foreign secretary must have got the instructions from her political bosses and asked to send out this message."

A retired official remembered that during the *Bofors controversy*, when Narain Dutt Tewari was the external affairs minister, missions abroad were told exactly how to face questions on the stability of the Rajiv Gandhi government.

"This has happened many times before. It is not unusual. I remember after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, circulars went out to every mission," said Muckund Dubey, foreign secretary during the tenure of the V.P. Singh government.

However, some of these circulars made many upright officers very uncomfort-

able. After all, it is an internal domestic matter and government officials should not be asked to take sides." He said some foreign service officers did not pay attention to circulars which had no business to be sent out. "The V.P. Singh government paid more attention to niceties and form, such circulars rarely went out," Mr Dubey said.

Officials refer to the Babri demolition, when the then foreign secretary J.N. Dixit was in charge. "We were told that the people who took part in the demolition were beyond the pale of the constitution, and there was no way to stop them without inviting a blood bath," one official remembered.

The demolition of the mosque, however, had worldwide reaction and it was natural for the missions to be given the official line.

# India fully backs peace: Solheim

By Nirupama Subramanian

RD-1  
COLOMBO, MARCH 24. The Norwegian special envoy, Mr. Erik Solheim, who has been trying to bring the Kumaratunga Government and the LTTE together for negotiations, has said in an interview to *The Hindu* that contrary to speculation, he was convinced the Indian Government was fully supportive of the peace process in Sri Lanka.

"I met the Indian Foreign Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, in Delhi last week. He asked Norway to continue our efforts and told us not to stop even if there

## Norwegian envoy bets on peace: Page 9

are setbacks and difficulties. India has no hidden agenda in Sri Lanka. We are one hundred per cent convinced that India is doing whatever it can to contribute to peace in the island," he said on Friday over telephone from Oslo.

He said India was willing to draw a line of distinction between the ban on the LTTE on its soil from its participation in peace talks in Sri Lanka. "The proscription of the LTTE in India is an entirely internal matter for India. But, of course, India acknowledges that peace can only be established if the Government of Sri Lanka talks with the LTTE, and that is exactly why India supports our modest efforts."

## Delhi kept informed

Mr. Solheim, who has been spearheading the Norwegian facilitatory efforts in Sri Lanka since last

May, said he had kept India informed about all major steps and "got useful advice from a country with much deeper knowledge about the region than Norway can ever dream of".

Recent reports in the Sri Lankan press have indicated that India had objected to the inclusion of certain countries in an international committee to monitor confidence-building measures to be implemented before talks got under way. Mr. Solheim said the composition of a monitoring committee, if the need for one arose, was a matter for the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to decide.

But in an indication that it was a potentially tricky issue, he added: "Norway is a trusted friend of India. I see no reason, if such a situation arose and anyone asked us to suggest countries, why Norway should propose countries to any such committee in the future that would be an offence to India."

Asked if he was convinced that the LTTE had given up its demand for a separate state, Mr. Solheim said the idea in trying to bring the parties to the table was that they should themselves sort out such issues. "The conflict in Sri Lanka has lasted very long and is extremely complicated and can never be resolved by Norway. The Government and the LTTE have to talk directly and then try to find the solutions. There are no quickfixes and talks will certainly be protracted. But talking is much better than fighting."

THE HINDU wishes its readers  
A HAPPY UGADI

THE HINDU

25 MAR 2001



## World leaders write to PM on Taliban

IT Correspondent  
New Delhi, March 22

VLADIMIR PUTIN, Yoshiro Mori, Tony Blair, the King of Bhutan and heads of several other countries have sent letters to Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee sharing India's shock and abhorrence of the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban.

Vajpayee had written to the heads of Governments of all countries with a significant Buddhist population as well as the P-5 countries and the United Nations Secretary-General on March 2 to rally world opinion against the Taliban move.



VLADIMIR PUTIN



TONY BLAIR

A foreign ministry spokesman yesterday said a number of these head of Governments had responded to the senseless destruction and thanked India for its efforts to raise the collective voice of the international community against it.

Thai Priem Minister Thaksin Shinawatra wrote back saying his country "appreciated India's offer to transfer all artifacts so that they can be preserved for future generations."

President Putin wrote: "These actions once again confirm the Taliba's hostility to the world's cultural heritage and rejection of the universally-upheld human values."

Prime Minister Hung Sen of Cambodia, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, Mongolia's President Natsagiin Bagabandi and King Jigme Singye Wangchuk of Bhutan sent similar letters.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 MAR 2001

# An officer too many in the MEA

5/16  
22/3  
H BULA DEVI  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 21. — Perhaps one should rechristen them as additional additional secretaries. The government has sanctioned one additional secretary's post in the headquarters of the ministry of external affairs in the South Block. But the latest count says the office has about 12 officers in this rank.

Should that be food for thought for the expenditure reforms commission, since every appointment of an additional secretary requires appropriate perquisites being provided to him/her?

MEA officials say they are "surprised at the pace at which additional secretaries, on transfer from foreign postings or promotion, were being accommodated in the headquarters." They feel this appointment policy is creating "an administrative mess".

Mr Raminder Singh Jassal, joint secretary (external publicity) and ambassador-designate to Israel, however, said these posts were "part of an internal arrangement", not "extra creations".

The latest IFS "History of Services" says the permissible cadre strength in Grade II at the headquarters is one, and for missions or posts abroad, it's 33. MEA's cricket squad of additional secretaries, complete with the 12th man, has five looking after Non-Resident Indians; administration; United Nations; Bangladesh-Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Maldives; and financial advise.

The sixth is functioning as the deputy director-general of Indian Council of Cultural Relations, an autonomous body. The seventh is a senior fellow in the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses. Numbers eight, nine and 10 are joint secretaries who are being promoted to the rank of additional secretary. The promotees' briefs are Latin America, policy planning and research, and the southern division. Number 11 is now on leave, awaiting posting.

It is the 12th man who promises to be the "best performer", though. A senior additional secretary, consular general in San Francisco, has reportedly been summoned to join headquarters as early as possible. The reason for the haste may be the official is likely to take over as secretary early next year.

What about the team's score? Foreign service rules say an additional secretary has to handle at least two divisions. But most of these officials are merely looking after the same area they were in charge of before the promotion. There aren't enough additional charges for these additional additional secretaries, MEA sources say.

THE STATESMAN

22 MAR 2001

# Red faces on the red carpet greet Mandela, Annan

SONIA TRIKHA  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

96-3 18/3  
AS India enacted its theatrical rendition of the Most Vibrant Democracy in the World on Friday, it had a visiting cast of two world leaders: South African leader Nelson Mandela and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Mandela was in New Delhi to accept the Gandhi Peace Award 2000 for his anti-Apartheid struggle. The 82-year-old



Wrong timing: (L) Annan, (R) Mandela

leader travelled a few thousand miles to receive the award named after his idol. His hosts, though, were elsewhere, at least in mind.

Except for President K R Narayanan who, speaking extempore, said the award was significant at this time because "materialism and human greed has taken over the world, more or less".

In the audience were Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, Home Minister L.K. Advani and Culture Minister Ananth Kumar.

The rest of the Cabinet was missing, perhaps too busy controlling the damage of the Tehelka fallout. And virtually the second the ceremony was over, Advani left.

The Opposition was represented by its leader Sonia Gandhi, daughter Priyanka and son-in-law Robert Vadra and a motley crew of Congress MPs.

When Mandela spoke about India as "a home away from home", as the nation that had taught several lessons on democracy, development and tolerance to "our fledgling democracy which is in the infant stages... India's secular state is an example for us",

most of those whom he was actually addressing were not there to lend their ears.

Not surprisingly, South African officials say the former President will use the rest of his time during the visit to catch up on the rest. Narayanan has even offered Mandela a holiday in far-away Kerala.

Annan's visit met another fate. He missed his call on the Defence Minister since there isn't one any more.

The UN Secretary

General also missed a chance to watch the pandemonium in Parliament in the world's largest democracy. Instead, Annan, who spent nearly two hours in Parliament House, was ushered into the Speaker's committee room to meet leaders of all parties.

Annan came to India after saying the one thing the government has badly wanted him to say: the Lahore Declaration and Simla Agreement should form the basis of talks with Pakistan. But there has been no time to celebrate that given that the government itself seems here today, gone tomorrow.

Thus, Annan spent most of today telling his inattentive listeners that bilateral talks are the only recourse for the Indo-Pak impasse. He met Vajpayee, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh and Sonia Gandhi.

Though, Annan didn't condemn Pakistan for cross-border terrorism or even hint that the military regime there is a stumbling block. Instead, he said Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf had "assured" him of restoring democracy by October 2002.

INDIAN EXPRESS

18/3/2001

## Chokila takes over as foreign secretary

The Times of India News Service

**NEW DELHI:** Chokila Iyer took over as the country's first woman foreign secretary on Tuesday. Her predecessor Lalit Mansingh will be taking the flight out to Washington on Wednesday, as India's ambassador to



Chokila Iyer

the U.S..

The petite new lady in South Block, gave an image of business as usual, saying: "In any job one takes over there are challenges ahead. I think in this job there are plenty of them."

"I think at present there have been lot of changes in the foreign policy. Government has taken a lot of positive steps which have helped in creating a very positive environment," she told reporters. "I look forward to carrying forward that momentum."

Ms Iyer, who was India's ambassador to Ireland, was to be transferred to The Hague, when she was recalled to replace Mr Mansingh. She arrived in mid-February and acquainted herself with the job, working closely with Mr Mansingh. She retires in June next year.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

1982

# How foreign powers 'engage' India — II

By P. S. Suryanarayana

THE 'AMERICAN Papers', a compilation of the now-declassified perceptions of the U.S. diplomats about Pakistan as also India during a hypersensitive period that encompassed the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971, reveal a highly nuanced approach by Washington towards South Asia. For long in the past, the late 1960s and early 1970s in particular, successive Governments in Islamabad saw their chequered but significant strategic links with the U.S. as Pakistan's equaliser in relation to India. The decisive end of the Cold War by the early 1990s and the high-profile engagement in 2000 between India and the then U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, have now altered the strategic dynamic of Islamabad's relationship with Washington. However, Pakistan has had no reason so far to revise its contemporaneous view that its acquisition of nuclear weapons since 1998 has signalled a new equaliser in its skewed equation with India. That explains, in part, why Pakistan does not want to lose this perceived new gain. Islamabad has not sought to reciprocate New Delhi's no-first-use offer.

Given these realities in the present context of strategic flux on the global scene, the emergence of Mr. George W. Bush as the U.S. President can be seen by Islamabad as a qualitative challenge and opportunity. The reasoning is that some members of Mr. Bush's brains trust tend to brush aside some aspects of the recent past, especially the major arms control agreements of the Cold War era, as ancient history. At a different but relevant echelon, Pakistan continues to look for friends, not masters (an Ayub Khan dichotomy) among the big powers in order to counter-balance India. These aspects will impinge on Islamabad's view of New Delhi in the run-up to Mr. Bush's finalisation of a definitive policy perception about India. Yet, inevitably, the intrinsic political and diplomatic cross-currents on the India-Pakistan front will also considerably shape Islamabad's outlook about New Delhi.

Pakistan's present military-led Government, headed by Gen. Pervez Musharraf, has not yet formulated a recognisably coherent framework to engage India diplo-

matically. Yet, piecing together the thoughts of diplomatic sources, it is obvious that Pakistan wants to deal with India on a win-win basis and not necessarily in terms of the old zero-sum calculations of the Cold War era. It is, of course, easy to characterise such a wish but difficult to envision its parameters. All the same, discernible indeed are the trend-lines of Pakistan's possible thought process which must not be misconstrued as the first or authoritative road-map by the Musharraf Government for parleys with India.

Behind the scenes, Pakistan is quite willing to recognise that there cannot be a dramatic breakthrough in its ties with India.

*It is not just the South Asian states that would like India to interact with them more consistently. The South East Asian and West Asian states too are looking at the scope for positive engagement.*

Nonetheless, two aspects of Islamabad's broad approach are transparent. First, the Musharraf regime has gradually come to regard the Lahore Declaration and the related documents of 1999 as some form of a composite vision statement for forward movement. The often acrimonious but somewhat incremental India-Pakistan dialogue makes for an intricate web indeed. The second and no less salient pointer is that Islamabad may wish to settle for nothing less than the promise of an assured sense of movement in parleys. This applies to any resumption of the India-Pakistan dialogue on a comprehensive range of issues including the Kashmir dispute.

From an Indian point of view, a seemingly commonsensical approach will be to defuse the bilateral tensions over potential nuclear brinkmanship. Confidence building measures in this sphere can be considered a *sine qua non* for a sense of movement forward. Yet, this will not certainly suit Pakistan's sense of priorities. It requires no perspicacity to spot the logic in play. Any mutual agreement on the no-first-use principle or a de-alert of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems can be

seen by Islamabad's conscience-keepers to favour India. Because, New Delhi's strategic depth in a time-space configuration is believed there to be superior to that of Pakistan's. This aspect of the India-Pakistan disconnect may preclude the possibility of an accord on nuclear CBMs ahead of, or even as a catalyst of, progress on the divisive political issues, which may not necessarily bear a strategic dimension.

A conceivable dilemma of this magnitude can be blamed on the so-called 'inverse relationship' between India and Pakistan (in the light of a similar concept taken note of by scholars such as Anthony McGrew for a period-specific equation be-

tween the U.S. and Japan). Yet, the need for a way out of the India-Pakistan quagmire cannot be exaggerated. Some progress is considered possible if the two countries could agree to set a reasonable and mutually acceptable time-frame for the resolution of their disputes in a composite dialogue. Equally important, as sources indicate, is the need for the two sides to define their disagreements across the entire spectrum with a view to addressing them.

Aside from these larger questions affecting the very meaning of a dialogue process, more immediate practical questions remain to be resolved quickly. Ranging from Islamabad's view of India's current ceasefire process in Jammu and Kashmir, the pragmatic puzzles extend to New Delhi's attitude towards the All Party Hurriyat Conference in regard to its desire to interact with the Musharraf regime on the Pakistan turf. While wishing to re-energise a dialogue with India in these difficult circumstances, Pakistan does appear to keep alive two other questions on its own agenda without a final answer to either at this moment. One of the posers relates to the

modalities of associating the Kashmir groups with any India-Pakistan dialogue. The other pertains to Pakistan's anxiety that the international community, led by the big powers, should remain a potential pressure group for ensuring a final settlement of the issues dividing Islamabad and New Delhi.

Another key South Asian issue centres on the political necessity of an external intercession in regard to the internal affairs of a state — Norway's bid to facilitate a possible dialogue in Sri Lanka between its Government and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. It is an elementary but enlightening reality that India does not command a veto over Norway's facilitation or the niceties of the process that Oslo might set in play or even the nuances of an eventual settlement. Yet, it is a measure of Colombo's style of engagement with New Delhi and the primacy of India in South Asia that the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, has chosen to keep the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, informed of the dynamics of Norway's involvement.

For Sri Lanka, it is not a question of diplomacy of conscience. The choices before Colombo are quite clear at this juncture. Thanks to a recent historical experience, India certainly is not in a mood now to facilitate a peace process in Sri Lanka. Norway, in contrast, is seen by Colombo as a third world-friendly country with no historical links with Sri Lanka. A question that Colombo can usefully explore in informal conjunction with India is that of a peace architecture in Sri Lanka insofar as that might relate to overall South Asian stability and security. A related issue is whether the LTTE will settle for plain devolution or a 'devolution-plus' package as an alternative to separate statehood for Sri Lanka's minority Tamils. However, it is not just the South Asian states that would like India to interact with them more consistently. The South East Asian and West Asian states, in India's extended neighbourhood, are by and large tracking New Delhi on their diplomatic radarscreens to look for any definitive scope for positive engagement

(Concluded)

THE HINDU

13 MAR 2001

# How foreign powers 'engage' India — I

By P. S. Suryanarayana

**T**HE ASCENSION of Mr. George W. Bush, son of a 'victorious' Cold-Warrior, as the U.S. President has inevitably induced major powers to revise or review their foreign policies. Not surprisingly in this milieu, even as the U.S. is taking the initiative, some other key countries have also begun to think about the nature and scope of their individual engagement with New Delhi. As a potentially important player, India is being assessed, among a host of states, in the context of the current international political debate on the prospects for a new multipolar world. The Bush administration's anticipatory view of India, kaleidoscopic as it might still turn out to be, will not by itself determine all the nuances of the changing global perceptions of New Delhi. Yet, the view of India from Washington may significantly impinge on this exercise by the other states. A logical input, therefore, relates to the Bush administration's first thoughts about India.

The U.S. obviously is seeking to move away from much of the "old think", especially in regard to sensitive issues such as nuclear non-proliferation. This does not necessarily imply a shift from some of the basics as formulated in the final years of the Clinton presidency. The U.S.-India 'Vision Statement', a characteristic contribution of the Clinton presidency, is still seen in Washington as a "fact of life" and "check list" for progress on the bilateral front. However, according to U.S. officials conversant with the current exercise in Washington, the signpost is made up of a simple but significant poser. What will India really make of its role in the global arena in strategic as also political and economic spheres? New Delhi's view of its own destiny in the present post-Cold War phase of international uncertainties may largely shape the Bush administration's evolving impressions of India, it is authoritatively indicated. It is, nonetheless, obvious to Indian observers that New Delhi has yet to define its global role or even regional profile.

In the reckoning of U.S. officials, however, a certainty is that India will "not" be put on the "back burner" of Mr. Bush's foreign policy establishment. One reason cited is the growing political presence of the Indian-American community on the

U.S. scene. This quiet development is said to be quite pronounced in ways yet to be appreciated in India itself. Yet, the first few snippets of the new India-related policy — outlined by the Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, and the Defence Secretary, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld — are considered inconclusive in scope despite being quite dramatic. The cautionary line is that "no single statement (in isolation) is definitive at the moment" as the new U.S. policy towards India.

Mr. Rumsfeld's views on the enduring worldwide dangers of atomic arms proliferation, in particular his first impulse to zero in on New Delhi as also certain alleged "rogue" states, need not necessarily be interpreted in terms of the "old think"

*The Bush administration's view of India will not by itself determine global perceptions of New Delhi. Yet, it may significantly impinge on them.*

about a world order defined by a perceived nuclear hegemony. In taking this line, the U.S. officials indicate, though, that the Bush administration may still expect India to live by its proclamatory moratorium on nuclear testing. On the somewhat related question of Washington's proposed missile defence system, still a divisive issue within the U.S. and on the international stage, the Bush administration's notion of "friends and allies" remains fuzzy. India's likely place in the U.S.'s final scheme of missile defence is, therefore, a matter of strategic conjecture at this stage.

Even in regard to Gen. Powell's idea that New Delhi could play the prime mover to maintain long-term peace in the Indian Ocean region, the surprise thought still remains a puzzle. India itself has never really articulated such a role ambition. Australia, which has a well-honed stake in the strategic affairs of IOR-ARC (the Indian Ocean Region Association for Regional Cooperation), is of the general view that the fledgling outfit is far from being organised to address such larger issues of peace. On a bilateral wavelength, Canberra could of course en-

gage New Delhi on a range of security and strategic issues of global and regional sweep, the Australian High Commissioner to India, Mr. Rob Laurie, noted in a conversation. An Indo-Australian strategic dialogue on a structured basis is still being studied. South Africa, too, has *locus standi* on the Indian Ocean affairs. Separately, the Commonwealth and the Non-Aligned Movement may simply pass over the Bush administration's preferences about India.

The bluff has been called in respect of the speculation that Washington might wish to treat India as a democratic frontline state to 'contain' China as an evolving powerhouse. The reason simply is that Mr. Bush may not want, at the pre-

sent moment, to play a Cold War-style zero-sum game in regard to India and China, given especially the sheer complexity of the ties among the three countries.

China has not proven, till recently at least, that it can shape the world outside its frontiers. This assessment was made by Gerald Segal, an international strategic affairs specialist, before China sought, only a few months ago, a participatory say over the means of refashioning the post-Cold War global political order: Beijing did so, pledging to refrain from promoting the ballistic missile development programmes of any country, Pakistan included. It is still debatable how far China can hope to apply its version of stability to reverse the present global disorder. It is in this context that India remains suspicious of China's nexus with Pakistan. However, China's direct counter-argument is that its "technical cooperation" with Pakistan under a normal state-to-state relationship should not be misconstrued by New Delhi at the behest of the "West".

A Chinese official said in a briefing that Beijing "understands India's security

concerns" and would want it to reciprocate. Without addressing the present plans of Washington for a futurist missile defence network, the Chinese mandarin drew attention to how Russia had some time ago visualised a strategic triangle linking Moscow with Beijing and New Delhi. It is difficult to foresee the future of such ideas, which have not even been blueprinted properly on paper. Nevertheless, Russia and the European Union (and its key constituents) will doubtless assess India afresh in the light of its eventual equation with the Bush administration. China, in contrast, has already begun re-engaging India in a larger framework that covers as an adjunct the strategic sustainability of India's hospitality to the Dalai Lama and now the Karmapa too.

In a unique category is India's current equation with Japan — a troubled but exceptional economic power and "net consumer of security" in Segal's conceptualisation of Tokyo's reliance on the U.S. for defence needs. While the Bush-New Delhi dynamic will, therefore, be particularly relevant to Japan too, it hopes to sustain the move towards a "global partnership" with India. This "partnership" is Tokyo's second such bilateral understanding, the only other one being the Japan-U.S. consultation institutionalised in reference to global issues of mutual concern.

Japan's Ambassador to India, Mr. Hiroshi Hirabayashi, identifies the imperatives of United Nations reforms and energy security among the several subjects for "global partnership" which was agreed upon by the two countries last August. The "partnership" does not paper over Japan's "economic measures" imposed on India owing to concerns over New Delhi's perceived lackadaisical attitude to signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. However, as Mr. Hirabayashi explained, the "partnership" was necessitated by New Delhi's growing international importance in strategic as also security and economic spheres, besides India's adherence to democracy and its spiritual values of relevance to Japan. Now, although India does not boast a "global partnership" with other countries, its dialogue with them too spans international trade and strategic terrors.

THE HINDU

12 MAR 2001

# Chokila takes over as foreign secretary today

*Says her new job is very challenging*

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 11: Ms Chokila Iyer will take over as the first-ever woman foreign secretary of India on Monday. She will replace Mr Lalit Mansingh who heads for Washington on Wednesday to take up his new assignment as India's ambassador to the United States.

Feeling upbeat about her new post, Ms Iyer remarked that her job was as challenging as another work. She was speaking to reporters at a reception organised by the ministry of external affairs to welcome her and bid goodbye to Mr Mansingh.

"It is coincidental," soft spoken Ms Iyer said when asked whether the Vajpayee government's decision to appoint her had anything to do with the observance of international women's year.

Ms Iyer, a 1964 batch Indian foreign service officer, will join on Monday evening. She has been in New Delhi for the last couple weeks. The foreign secretary-designate was briefed by various desks about her new assignment.

Apart from being the first woman foreign secretary, Ms Iyer is a tribal from Sikkim. She has a daunting task ahead to manage the ministry

where her appointment had surprised many of her colleagues. A senior official, Mr S.T. Devare (secretary, economic relations), is said to have proceeded on leave. Mr Devare is senior to Ms Iyer and was due to retire next month.

Ms Iyer is one of the few foreign secretaries who had no experience of what has been described as "important postings." Among several posts she held in the ministry are director (Europe-West), joint secretary (policy planning), joint secretary (coordination), joint secretary (Africa) and additional secretary (passport and visa). Before being appointed the foreign secretary she was ambassador to Ireland. She has also been India's ambassador to Mexico.

The new foreign secretary will have a full 14-month tenure before she retires in June 2002. She assumes office at a time when India is engaged in active dialogue with all the major powers of the world. India's relations with the US, old ally Russia and Asian giant China have been on upswing. The relationship with arch rival Pakistan continues to be in a stalemate.

The new foreign secretary will have to carry forward the dialogue with the key powers of the world.

THE ASIAN AGE

12 MAR 2001

# MEA calls novel meet to find ways to bridge gap with Bush

Indrani Bagchi

NEW DELHI 8 MARCH

WINDS OF change are blowing through the corridors of the ministry of external affairs (MEA), with a novel brainstorming session on India-US engagement coming up with refreshing ideas about how to reach out to the new boys in Washington. Thursday's meeting, where the MEA sought rather than dispensed wisdom also comes weeks before foreign minister Jaswant Singh wings his way to the US in his first visit after the new Bush administration has taken office.

The strategy session was a first of sorts. Hosted by outgoing foreign secretary Lalit Mansingh, it included the new incumbent, Ms Chokila Iyer, who takes up her responsibilities next Monday, while Mr Mansingh packs his

bags to go to Washington. The returning ambassador from the US, Naresh Chandra, was also part of the brainstorming, along with a phalanx of former foreign secretaries, ambassadors, strategists and defence representatives.

But most importantly, for the first time, the MEA displayed a clear willingness to take a proactive role in engaging the US, based on the belief that in some fundamental way, India will need to be reintroduced to the US in language and images that speak to Bush rather than to Clinton.

One of the results of Thursday's meeting is the possibility of the MEA setting up a multi-disciplinary task force to monitor the US — and implications for India.

While strategic issues like China, national missile defence

(NMD), non-proliferation, terrorism and Asian stability obviously took centre stage, a clearer look at the personalities that shape the Bush cabinet merits a magnifying glass. The new US President is known to be personality driven unlike his predecessor who was high on policy, besides having a hang-over of his father's administration.

The defence establishment will probably be top on the policy list in the early years of the new Bush administration. The reason for this is not only the predominance of defence hands and strategists peppering the cabinet, from General Powell to Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney to Richard Haass, but also the overarching importance given to NMD and its attendant policy implications.

*The Economic Times*

9 MAR 2001



## Build up international pressure: Natwar Singh

By Our Special Correspondent

**BANGALORE, MARCH 4.** The former Minister of State for External Affairs and member of the Congress Working Committee, Mr. K. Natwar Singh, has called for the boycott of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan for vandalising and destroying the relics of Buddhism, including the famous Bamiyan Buddhas. Speaking to presspersons today, Mr. Natwar Singh, who heads the External Affairs Department of the AICC, said that India should build up international pressure against the Taliban regime and ensure it was boycotted in international fora.

Recalling that he had visited the Bamiyan Buddhas in the company of the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, in 1969 (King Zaheer Shah was the ruler of Afghanistan at that time), Mr. Singh said that nobody had expected such destruction in the 21st century.

The Taliban rulers had done what no other Muslim rulers of Afghanistan and neighbouring countries had done in the last 1000 years. Some of them such as Mohammed Ghazni, Babar, Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali had invaded India.

Mr. Natwar Singh noted that Afghanistan was part of the empire of Ashoka and was famous for its relics of the Gandhara school of art. What was being destroyed by the Taliban was the art and heritage of Afghanistan.

The former Secretary for External Affairs attributed the rise of fundamentalism in some of the Islamic countries to the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union. The Communist youth in some of those countries had become religious fundamentalists.

About the coming Assembly elections, Mr. Natwar Singh said the Congress had good chances in two out of the five States.

THE HINDU

5 MAR 2001

# PM asks world to condemn Taliban

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, March 2

THE PRIME MINISTER has written to the heads of several countries, urging them to condemn the Taliban's destruction of the 2,000-year-old Bamiyan Buddha statues.

"The collective voice of humanity should be raised against this outrage," Vajpayee's letter tells the heads of state of the US, Russia, the UK, China, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Thailand, Laos and Myanmar, and United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Pakistan has been left out of the list. Islamabad is one of the Taliban's backers and its reaction to the destruction of the statues, though negative, stops short of condemning the act.

"The Taliban... be made to see reason. We should also take up this matter with those countries that have influence with the Taliban so that they too could intervene to seek the withdrawal of the decree."

Vajpayee goes on to say that the Taliban decree "represents a further obscurantist regression—an assault on centuries of Afghan tradition and upon an irreplaceable civilisational inheritance of ail mankind. We are disturbed to see that this

demolition is already in progress."

Meanwhile, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh told Parliament that the Government has offered to ship the remaining Buddhist statues and artefacts from Afghanistan to India at its own cost for safe-keeping.

"India would be happy to arrange for the transfer of all these artefacts to India where they would be kept safely and preserved for all mankind, in the full knowledge and clear understanding that they are, in the first place and above all, treasures of the Afghan people themselves," he said.

Earlier, Singh's announcement that the Taliban had already destroyed Buddhist statues and artefacts preserved in Afghanistan's museums was greeted with cries of "shame".

Both Houses of Parliament adopted a unanimous resolution condemning the Taliban's "anti-civilisational" stand and sought UN intervention to stop the "senseless and destructive act".

The Taliban's announcements of intended acts of religious fundamentalism and terrorism against human culture and civilisation were shocking, the resolution said.

Strongly condemning Taliban,

Parliament hoped that the world community and the UN in particular would take note of this and prevail upon the Taliban regime to desist from destroying the statues.

The largest of their kind in the world, the two Buddha statues date back to between the 2nd and 5th century BC when Buddhism flourished in the country. The statues were a synthesis of Greek, Persian, Central and South Asian arts adorned with rich frescoes. There are images of Buddhas in maroon robes strolling in fields of flowers and milk-white horses drawing the sun-god's golden chariot through a dark blue sky.

While Singh called the Taliban's act "cultural vandalism," Deputy Chairperson Najma Heptulla said this was the blackest day in the history of civilisation. Pointing out that Islam did not preach destruction, she recalled her visit to Bamiyan and wondered about the fate of other historic statues in Afghanistan.

Pranab Mukherjee (Congress) said words were not enough to condemn this act of wanton destruction. Ram Jethmalani said the matter was of international concern as "the Taliban are destroying signposts of history".

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 MAR 2001

# Left trade unions slam 'anti-people' Budget

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, February 28

LEFT TRADE unions today slammed Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha for curbing the rights and interests of the working people. Sinha, they argued, sought to make up for the fiscal deficit by massive disinvestments, downsizing the Government and slashing interest rates for the Public Provident Fund and small savings. They also pointed to the Finance Minister's bid to seize the protection that workers used to enjoy under the Industrial Disputes Act.

Trade unions are also annoyed with his proposals to hike diesel and fertilizer prices. The National Platform of Mass Organisations will launch a nationwide protest on Friday.

"The Budget is loaded heavily against the ordinary man. The Finance Minister has virtually given a free hand to employers over lock out and lay-off. From now on, most industrialists won't have to consult the Government before announcing a lock out. Sinha has also encouraged contract labour in jobs of perennial nature even in the core sector. The minister also proposes to repeal the Sick Industries Companies Act (SICA) to expedite disinvestments. The slashing of interests in small savings would also tell upon the development initiative in the States," CITU general secretary Chittabrata Majumdar said.

AITUC state general secretary and former MP Gurudas Dasgupta maintained that the Budget would have a telling impact on the middle and lower income groups. "Although the tax slab has been kept intact, the Finance Minister seeks to take away the



ASHOK NATH DEY

Brokers at the Calcutta Stock exchange glued to their computer screens as Finance Minister presents his Budget proposals.

Provident Fund benefits. PF beneficiaries would lose a total of Rs 1,050 crore a year under the present proposals. There are many more schemes involving lakhs of employees both in the public and private sector. The total loss would be around Rs 4,000 crore. The ordinary and the poor, who deposit in post offices, would lose another Rs 540 crore after the

interest rates for small savings are slashed."

Dasgupta won't buy the argument that Sinha's prescriptions would generate employment. "It can't be. Sinha has announced a moratorium on fresh recruitments in banks by disbanding the recruitment board. He has plans to downsize the government by 10 per cent. In a desper-

ate bid to make for the fiscal deficit, he has decided to sell out 27 profit making companies." The suspension of LTC would also lead to loss of revenue for the Railways, Dasgupta argued.

Pointing to the "disinvestments spree", the CITU general secretary felt that the government was keen to invest on the secondary sector at the cost of

infrastructure and human resource that the country has. "I can cite instances where the Voluntary Separation Package costs more than the cost to revive the unit. Sinha has always harped on productivity but has hardly done anything for the sector. Seven CPSUs in West Bengal and many more in other states have been denied allocations in the plan.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 1 MAR 2001

# Ties with big powers

By K. K. Katyal

*The dealings with big powers have been a fascinating and rewarding experience — an apt subject for informed discussion by our parliamentarians.*

HD-12  
2672

**T**HE FOREIGN policy part of the President, Mr. K. R. Narayanan's address to Parliament has not attracted attention in initial comments, perhaps because it was the least controversial and the scope for differences over various formulations limited. The references had to be brief and some annotation is called for to bring out the significance of recent developments, for instance in the context of India's relationship with big powers — the U.S., Germany from among European (Union members and China. In particular, the mixed signals from Washington in the midst of the transition from one administration to another, the new dimension to the ties with Germany as represented by the current visit of its Defence Minister, Mr. Rudolf Scharfing, and the on-going contacts with Beijing, climaxed by the recent trip to India of Mr. Li Peng, number two in the Chinese hierarchy. China, according to persistent reports from Beijing, keeps a close watch on the evolution of India's ties with the U.S. even as it mulls over its equation with the Bush administration.

New Delhi has played it cool to the stray, discomfiting pointers of the Bush administration's India policy. The President's address referred to the U.S. in highly positive terms. The draft was finalised by the Cabinet well before the unsavoury signals came from Washington but, even then, the significance of the presidential words could not be minimised.

The address noted the "steadily growing strength of India's interaction with the U.S.", in particular the "firm foundation for the new phase in our relationship" laid by the exchange of top-level visits, and the role of the Indian-American community in changing the American perception of India. "We continue to engage," it said, "with the Administration of President George W. Bush to foster a stronger and mutually beneficial bilateral relationship."

New Delhi prefers to go by the observations of the U.S. functionary concerned with the conduct of foreign relations, the new Secretary of State, Mr. Colin Powell, during his confirmation hearing by the Senate rather than by the remarks of the Defence Secretary, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld,

or the Director, Central Intelligence Agency, Mr. George Tenet. According to Mr. Powell, "India has to be a high priority for foreign policy activities of the U.S." because, as against its role in the past when "they were trapped in another kind of world", it "is all opened up and it is the soon-to-be-largest country by population, it is a powerful country and it is a nuclear-armed country. We have to engage more broadly with India". He then spoke, on the one hand, of doing "what we can to constrain their nuclear programme at this time" and, on the other, of helping them with economic development. And, in reply to questions, he promised to review sanctions and "to see whether this is the time to move forward and remove the remaining sanctions that are in place".

Mr. Rumsfeld, however, threw a pebble, so to say, in the still waters of bilateral relations, bracketing India with North Korea and Iran, while mentioning the countries posing a threat to the security of the U.S. and its allies. On his part, Mr. Tenet seemed to take exception to Indo-Russian cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy, saying Moscow sought to use trade in sensitive technologies to promote its ties with China, India and Iran. Somewhat inexplicably, the question of Russian cooperation with India in establishing nuclear power plants has been raked up now. The agreement on two plants pre-dated the prohibitory regime, put together by nuclear powers. As for the rest, Moscow stated categorically that it would not countenance any pressure because the proposed facilities were to be covered by safeguards.

New Delhi may tend to take a charitable view of the dissonance in Washington — as an unavoidable case of confusion in an administration which is yet to settle down, as a situation wherein there is no check on thoughtless utterances and coherence is an easy casualty. However, India cannot

take for granted the continued understanding of its concerns that was seen towards the end of the Clinton era. A sustained effort will be necessary to preserve and build on the gains of the recent past, while recognising that bipartisan support, in the U.S., to foreign policy issues could not exclude variations in style, leading to material shifts in policy.

In particular, New Delhi would need to keep a close watch on the Bush administration's line on the nuclear issue. Those who derived comfort from the Republican Party's dislike of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and envisaged an easing of pressure on India have to revise their opinion. The new administration may push its non-proliferation agenda in other forms.

It was, therefore, just as well that the very presidential address, which spoke of an improvement in Indo-U.S. relations, also reiterated New Delhi's resolve to maintain a credible minimum nuclear deterrent. "Our security imperatives compel us" to do so until the objective of global, comprehensive and non-discriminatory disarmament was achieved, it said. That was precisely the stand the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, took in his protracted dialogue with the U.S. State Department representative, Mr. Strobe Talbott, in the past. Any fresh engagement, Washington needs to be reminded, would have to start from that position.

As regards Germany, the chill that set in after Pokhran-II is a thing of the past, thanks to the pragmatism shown by Berlin and the painstaking efforts by diplomats from the two sides. Germany reacted sharply to the May 1998 nuclear tests, making its chagrin known through various demonstrative actions — abrupt cancellation of talks with an Indian delegation after its arrival in the country, suspension of the development assistance and the hard line on multilateral fora such as G-8 meetings.

That phase ended — decisively — with the India visit of the Foreign Minister, Mr. Joschka Fischer, last year. The normality and the warmth of the past have been restored. Development aid has been resumed and entry norms have been relaxed for experts in information technology. The new cordiality is reflected in the visiting Defence Minister's discussions on steps to strengthen contacts between the two defence establishments and to promote conceptual like-mindedness.

The President's address dwelt on the "qualitatively higher level of India's strategic partnership with the European Union" which, according to it, was evident from the first-ever India-E.U. summit in Lisbon. That may be too tall a claim, but the confidence that "our warm relations with the U.K., France, Germany, Italy and other European countries will continue to acquire new dimensions" was justified.

As regards the U.K., the steps contemplated by it to bar the use of British soil for terrorist activities in India and the finality about a major deal — India's order for advanced jet trainers — represented a high degree of positivism.

The address reiterated India's commitment to "friendly and good-neighbourly ties with China, based on Panchsheel and mutual sensitivity to each other's concerns", with a warm reference to Mr. Li Peng's visit. This note of satisfaction was justified, considering that the two sides had undone the damage caused to the bilateral relations by mutual suspicions and distrust, in the post-test phase, and were poised to take new initiatives to strengthen their ties and to deal with unresolved key issues.

While the magnitude of the challenges on subjects such as "description" of the Line of Actual Control in the border areas and reconciling the security concerns is not to be under-estimated, the political will and maturity mustered by them are a good augury.

The dealings with big powers, as a whole, have been a fascinating and rewarding experience — an apt subject for informed discussion by our parliamentarians.

THE HINDU

20 FEB 2001

## South Block set to welcome new faces

H BULA DEVI  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Feb. 24. — South Block is geared up for a new look. Besides the routine inevitable changes, the first ever woman foreign secretary will take charge in mid-March.

With Mrs Chokila Iyer assuming office next month, many heads are expected to roll at the joint secretary level in important desks.

Some posts will fall vacant automatically with a couple of secretary level officials retiring soon. A few crucial post-

ings have already started taking place.

Posts about to fall vacant include secretary (east) Mr KV Rajan who is due to retire next month. The secretary (economic relations) Mr ST Devere is also due for retirement in June.

There will be some changes in important desks. Joint secretary Mr Vivek Katju presently looking after Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan is reportedly set for a posting in Myanmar. Mr Katju is scheduled to leave in June. A hunt is on for his replacement. He won't be able to leave the cru-

cial position until the ministry finds a suitable officer to replace him.

Another important desk, the America division, has already witnessed a replacement.

Mr Alok Prasad who was earlier heading the division, took over as deputy chief of mission in Washington last month. He has been replaced by Mr Jayant Prasad.

Mr Nalin Surie, India's Ambassador to Poland, has now taken charge of the the East Asia division. He replaced Mr TCA Rangachari.

Changes will also take place

in the East Europe division. With Mr M Ganapathi, the incumbent, posted in Australia, this division is set to welcome a new face.

The post of joint secretary, external publicity, will also fall vacant shortly. Incumbent Mr Raminder Singh Jassal is going to Israel. A hunt is on for this post, considered an important post in the ministry.

With joint secretary Mr Pavan Verma posted as India's Ambassador to Cyprus, the post for joint secretary (Africa) will also fall vacant soon.

THE STATESMAN

25 FEB 2001

## Major parties hail ceasefire extension

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 21.** Major political parties today welcomed the Government's decision to extend the unilateral ceasefire for the third time in Jammu and Kashmir and hoped that Pakistan would respond positively.

Opposition parties, however, were critical of the Government for its inability to use the ceasefire period to consolidate the peace process.

Welcoming the decision, the BJP vice-president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthy, said all the parties had favoured extension of the ceasefire. "Let us now hope that Pakistan realises its responsibility and reciprocates," he said.

The Congress spokesman, Mr. Anand Sharma, said the CPP executive committee would meet early tomorrow to finalise its stand and

make it known in Parliament. The CPI(M) politburo member, Mr. Prakash Karat, said while his party welcomed the decision, the Government should come out with what it intends to do to initiate the political process. So far, there is no political input on matters like negotiations with Pakistan or its stance on the Hariyat Conference.

The CPI(ML) general secretary, Mr. Dipankar Bhattacharya, said the ceasefire would become "meaningful and effective only when it is backed by confidence-building measures."

### RSS welcomes, VHP opposes

The RSS and the VHP took diametrically opposite stands on the decision to extend the

ceasefire with the former cautiously welcoming the move and the latter vehemently opposing it. "If the extension can result in bringing the terrorist outfits to the negotiating table, the ceasefire is welcome," the RSS spokesman, Mr. M. C. Vaidya said. The VHP senior vice-president, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, said his organisation was opposed to "continuous experimenting" which has led to killings of innocent citizens.

The Janata party president, Dr. Subramanian Swamy, criticised the decision saying it was "not only wrong policy and appeasement of terrorism, but it has long term consequences of undermining India's sovereignty in Kashmir". — PTI

THE HINDU

22 FEB 2001

# Truce lobbied to all-party court

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Feb. 20: In an attempt to make both friends and foes part of a decision on the Kashmir ceasefire, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has called an all-party meeting at noon tomorrow for a discussion on the situation in the state.

The meeting, scheduled to be held at the Prime Minister's residence, is aimed at staving off criticism on whatever decision the Centre takes. The Cabinet Committee on Security is set to meet tomorrow evening to discuss whether the ceasefire, which ends next Monday, should be extended a third time.

After a five-day flare-up, the tension in the Valley eased today. Five top Hurriyat Conference leaders, including Yasin Malik and Democratic Freedom Party chief Shabir Ahmad Shah, were released. Mirwaiz Omar Farooq, Abdul Gani Lone and Sheikh Aziz met visiting US Congressman Joseph R. Pitts later in the day and discussed the truce.

At the all-party meet, Vajpayee and national security adviser Brajesh Mishra are expected to explain the circumstances in which

the truce was enforced and what its gains and losses have been.

The decision to call the meeting was taken this afternoon following persistent demands from the BJP's allies — primarily the Telugu Desam and Trinamul Congress — that the Centre must "enlighten" them on the ground realities in Jammu and Kashmir.

The government had initially planned to invite just the NDA constituents who reportedly felt "slighted" because the Prime Minister, while briefing a Congress delegation in detail around 10 days ago, had "ignored" his allies.

But the Centre decided to involve the Opposition as well, given that Parliament is in session and a decision, either way on the ceasefire could spark criticism in the House.

In her address to the Congress Parliamentary Party today, Sonia Gandhi went hammer and tongs at the government and spoke about the "utter confusion" and "lack of clarity" on Kashmir.

"The ministries are working at cross-purposes, interested more in scoring debating points than combating cross-border terrorism. The ceasefire has remained a military tactic, not a political or a diplomatic strategy," a Congress release quoted Sonia as saying.

Within the NDA, parties like the Desam have privately expressed reservations about the truce. "We are genuinely confused. We have no intention of embarrassing the government, but we feel we have a right to know what prompted the government to declare the ceasefire," Desam sources said.

BJP sources said the decision to convene the all-party meeting was not entirely supported by the Cabinet Committee on Security. Till late evening, L.K. Advani's and George Fernandes' staff denied that a such a meeting was on, while sources in the Prime Minister's Office confirmed it.

The BJP is divided on the truce. While one section feels the move had "enhanced Vajpayee's image as a statesman", others insist that ground realities ought to be kept in mind before any decision is taken.

"The communal killings and the repeated attacks on our security forces are ominous portends. They show that militants supported by Pakistan continue to have the upper hand because both perceive India as a soft state," BJP sources said.

The "hardline" section is worried about the fallout of the peace moves on voters in states like Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.

THE TELEGRAPH

21 FEB 2001

# Mandarins sulk over ad hoc extension policy

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Feb. 11: The controversy over Chokila Iyer's appointment as foreign secretary, superseding some seniors, is far from over.

Days before she assumes charge, her batchmate and secretary (economic relations) Sudhir Deware is going on leave — a move that is being seen as a sign of disenchantment among officers who have not been provided with an honourable exit.

Iyer is due to arrive next

week to take up her new assignment. Her work will overlap with that of outgoing foreign secretary Lalit Mansingh for about three weeks before he leaves for Washington in early March to take charge as ambassador to the United States.

Deware, who retires on June 30, is going on leave ostensibly to prepare for his retirement. But insiders have interpreted it as a fallout of the government's "arbitrary" policy on granting extension to civil servants.

Though both Iyer and De-

ware are from the 1964 batch of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), Iyer ranked below Deware on the merit list and was, therefore, a junior in service.

Disappointment over the choice of foreign secretary has been brewing for several months. When Kanwal Sibal, a 1966 batch officer posted as ambassador to France, was tipped to take over, many contenders wrote to the government complaining about being overlooked. Sibal's appointment would have meant that two batches of the

IFS — 1964 and 1965, which have about 20 diplomats — would have been ignored.

Sensing widespread discontent, the government chose Iyer as the first woman to head the foreign service. But if South Block thought the selection of a woman would calm disgruntled officials, it was mistaken.

Sibal, who was to take up the post of secretary (east), refused to move out of Paris. This sparked a chain reaction in other key missions, where senior diplomats refused to move out.

Apart from Deware, there are two other senior diplomats from the 1964 batch still in the service — Sati Lamba and Deb Mukherjee, the ambassadors to Moscow and Kathmandu. While Lamba retires on July 31, Mukherjee has till about November this year before his tenure ends.

Neither Lamba nor Mukherjee has so far been given an extension or a post-retirement assignment. The foreign ministry has, however, granted almost a year's extension to Nareshwar Dayal, the high commissioner in

London. Another diplomat from the same batch, Irshat Aziz, was given a 1.5-year assignment in Tunisia after his retirement.

Many senior civil servants had expected the BJP government to follow a uniform policy on extensions. There would have been less criticism if the government had stuck to a standard rule on its sensitive subject.

But like its predecessor, the Vajpayee government, too, has been following an arbitrary policy on granting an extension to a few while refusing others.

THE TELEGRAPH

12 FEB 2001



# Congress criticises Vajpayee on Kashmir ceasefire policy

By SHAMID FARIDI

⑩ 98/10/11 AA-3  
New Delhi, Feb. 6: The Congress on Tuesday criticised the Union government for "frittering away" the precious period of the ceasefire by failing to initiate a political action during this period to bring lasting peace to the trouble-torn Jammu and Kashmir.

"The duration of ceasefire could have been used by the government to bring peace in the state. But the government is going very slow. If it had acted fast, ceasefire could have yielded better results," Congress general secretary Ghulam Nabi Azad told reporters here after meeting the Prime Minister as part of a high-level delegation of his party which included Manmohan Singh, Arjun Singh and Natwar Singh as other members.

After a two-hour long meeting with the Prime Minister, who was accompanied by home minister L.K. Advani, foreign minister Jaswant Singh, defence minister George Fernandes, besides a number of officials, the Congress leaders said that Centre and the state governments should be more effective and forthcoming.

"There appears to be no coordination between the

governments at the Centre and in Jammu and Kashmir. There has also not been any coordination between the central government and the Opposition political parties in the country. The government steadfastly refused to take the Opposition parties into confidence on the Kashmir issue. This was also one of the reasons for the failure of the government to capitalise on the ceasefire," Mr Azad said.

He said "Congress president Sonia Gandhi had met the Prime Minister immediately after the massacre of Sikhs at Chhisinghpura in Jammu and Kashmir and had asked him to provide security to the members of the Singh community. If the government had heeded the Congress president's advice, lives of Sikhs killed on Sunday could have been saved."

"Government has been lacking in quick actions," Mr Azad claimed. He said the government feels that there has been a good impact of the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir. The Congress leader said that the party delegation called on the Prime Minister to seek an explanation on his government's policy on Kashmir, including the relevance of ceasefire in the light of continuing killings by militant organisations that have opposed the ceasefire.

THE ASIAN AGE

37 FEB 2001

# Our stand on Kashmir still same, says MEA

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 5: Barely two days after the first-ever telephonic conversation between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf, India and Pakistan on Monday were locked in a fresh bout of "war of words" as New Delhi maintained that its stance on Kashmir remains "unchanged."

Responding Gen. Musharraf's statement, MEA spokesperson said India's position vis-à-vis Pakistan has not changed. The official said that New Delhi believes that Islamabad was abetting cross-border terrorism. "We have made our position clear from

time to time. Our policy is consistent and our position remains unchanged," the official said in response to Gen. Musharraf's statements.

After the telephonic conversation, which was seen as a positive development by experts on both sides of the border, Gen. Musharraf had attacked India for "oppressive rule" in Kashmir and demanded permission to Hurriyat leaders to visit Pakistan and asked New Delhi to "without any further delay, respond positively to our peace initiatives."

Reacting to the statement, a foreign office spokesperson said that there was encouragement and abatement to cross-border terror-

ism in Jammu and Kashmir by Pakistan.

Such was the Indian reaction that when the spokesperson was asked on the proposed India-Pakistan cricket match at Sharjah, he said it was not a scheduled event. "Nothing which was scheduled has been cancelled," he said, pleading ignorance about the move which was widely reported in the media.

New Delhi also seems to have taken affront to the controversy regarding who called whom. There was confusion whether Prime Minister Vajpayee telephoned Gen. Musharraf last week or vice versa. The foreign office stuck to its statement of Saturday which said that Gen. Musharraf called Prime Minister Vajpayee. "The statement issued

by MEA makes it clear Gen. Musharraf had telephoned Mr Vajpayee," he said.

In response to Gen. Musharraf's statement, the spokesperson said Mr Vajpayee had articulated India's stand during his conversation with the Pakistani military ruler. This had been clearly reflected in remarks made by external affairs minister Jaswant Singh in his just-concluded visit to Cairo.

Pakistan on Monday observed solidarity day on Kashmir. Experts in New Delhi feel that Gen. Musharraf's hard talk on Kashmir was part of his effort to cater to headline elements within Pakistan who were opposed to an amicable settlement of the age-old dispute.

THE ASIAN AGE

6 FEB 2001

## PM visit to Malaysia, Japan put off

By Our Special Correspondent *g f Pomin*

*HD* NEW DELHI, FEB. 3. Bowing to domestic political pressure, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today decided to postpone, for now, his official visit to Malaysia and Japan to remain in the country and oversee the relief efforts in the wake of the devastating earthquake in Gujarat. Mr. Vajpayee's journey was to begin on February 7 and was to last till February 14. *4/2*

There were murmurs of protest that the Prime Minister was himself planning to be away on a foreign trip while asking the entire country to pitch in with relief and rehabilitation in Gujarat. The trip, it was felt, would have been seen as an expression of insensitivity, given the enormity of the devastation caused by the quake.

Earlier, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, postponed his proposed trip to Turkey, which was to have begun on January 30 last. Mr. Advani has been camping in Gujarat. The Prime Minister did visit the State for a day on January 29. The next day, however, he was in Lucknow, where it was reported that the State Government

had spent a staggering Rs. 2 crores on advertising the prime ministerial visit. It was obvious that whatever the possible foreign policy gains, the Malaysia/Japan trip would have resulted in domestic political losses to Mr. Vajpayee.

The decision to postpone the trip had been taken by the time the Prime Minister met the leaders of the political parties this morning. Obviously, Mr. Vajpayee felt compelled not to let other political parties make the suggestion and then be seen as giving in to the Opposition's demand. A quick consultation with the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, away in Cairo, firmed up the decision to put off the trip.

The Foreign Secretary, Mr. Lalit Mansingh, intimated the envoys of the two countries the Prime Minister's decision to reschedule the trip. According to a statement of the Ministry of External Affairs, "the Governments of Malaysia and Japan have been informed and they have expressed full understanding of this decision. We will work with the Governments of these two countries to identify mutually convenient dates for the Prime Minister's visit as early as possible."

THE HINDU

3 FEB 2001

- A FEB 2001

# Calamity connects Atal and Pervez

FROM PRANAV SHARMA

New Delhi, Feb. 2: In a gesture being seen as setting the thaw in frozen bilateral relations, Pervez Musharraf and Atal Bihari Vajpayee started their first official contact this evening.

The five-minute conversation came along with Delhi's green signal to the Indian cricket team to play in the Sharjah triangular against Pakistan and Bangladesh to raise funds for quake victims. Vajpayee himself directed sports minister Uma Bhatti to give the go-ahead.

Earlier this week, Musharraf had conveyed his sympathies for

quake victims in a message to Vajpayee and subsequently sent three plane-loads of relief material. Though many saw this as a public relations game, Delhi could hardly ignore the gesture.

Though today's conversation was very brief, its implications are much bigger. The PMO issued a two-para statement on the telephonic talks, which overshadowed Vajpayee's chat with former US President Bill Clinton in the morning. Clinton, too, has offered to help reinstate quake survivors.

This evening, the Pakistan chief executive took the initiative to call up the Prime Minister to again convey his sympathy for "the great loss of lives and devas-

tation caused by the earthquake in Gujarat". The leaders spoke in Hindustani, punctuated in places with English words.

This was the first conversation between the two leaders since Musharraf seized power in 1999.

Musharraf appreciated Vajpayee's gesture of publicly thanking Pakistan for sending relief, citing it as one reason why he called up. Vajpayee returned the thanks, saying his "gesture was greatly appreciated by the people of India".

The Prime Minister assured Musharraf of "India's continuing desire to build good neighbourly relations with Pakistan".

The conversation, held be-

tween 7.10 and 7.15 pm, had become the talk of diplomatic circles much before it began.

South Block, however, sought to play down the conversation to ensure it is not seen as the first step to resume the talks stalled since February 1999. It was keen to establish that Vajpayee was merely acknowledging Pakistan's aid for the quake victims.

There was confusion about who took the initiative to break the ice. This was sparked by a statement Vajpayee made at a function this afternoon that he would soon be speaking to Musharraf. The Prime Minister said he was happy that Pakistan was trying to help in India's time

of distress. But in the event, it was clarified that the Pakistan leader had picked up the hotline.

Speculation mounted in spite of Vajpayee making it clear in the afternoon that talks could resume only if Islamabad created a "conductive atmosphere" by reining in militants.

Asked if he would discuss other issues, Vajpayee said: "It is at the time of distress that people come together and share grief." On whether this would lead to resumption of talks, he added: "We have always favoured talks for which the right atmosphere has to be created. Violence, killings and terrorism must stop and the climate should be such that fruitful

and meaningful parleys can take place."

In Islamabad, Musharraf expressed the hope that the chat with Vajpayee would lead to the resumption of talks.

By agreeing to take the call, Vajpayee has signalled that India appreciates Pakistan's gesture and will respond favourably whenever Islamabad expresses the desire for good neighbourly relations. But at the same time, he has made it clear that the onus to resume talks lies with Pakistan.

Earlier this morning, Clinton spoke to Vajpayee and said Indian Americans were "very keen" to extend help to the quake survivors in whatever way possible.

THE TELEGRAPH

3 FEB 2001

# Vajpayee, Musharraf to 'keep in touch'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, FEB. 2 The telephone call by the Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, to the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, is of enormous symbolic value in the context of the recent initiatives by both the countries to "forget the past" and move forward into the future.

The most significant aspect of the brief conversation between the two leaders is their resolve to "keep in touch".

A senior official in the Pakistan Foreign office told *The Hindu* that in the course of the conversation, Gen. Musharraf not only expressed his condolences for the devastating quake in Gujarat but also told Mr. Vajpayee not to hesitate in asking for any sort of help.

Only a few know that the Pakistan military leader was among the first international leaders to offer sympathies after the killer quake. A special courier delivered the condolence message of Gen. Musharraf to the Indian High Commissioner, Mr. Vijay K. Nambiar, who was in the midst of a reception to mark the Republic Day function. The very next day Pakistan offered to provide relief material. The press here in the last few days has commented ex-

tensively on the gesture made by the military leadership and said that such gestures could go a long way in easing tension between the two countries.

The telephone call is a follow up to the offer made by Pakistan to extend relief to the quake victims. By its prompt response, the military leadership has sought to demonstrate its "keenness" on a resumption of dialogue with India for resolution of all differences including Kashmir.

## Pope's emissaries in Bhuj

NEW DELHI, FEB. 2. Pope John Paul II has rushed two emissaries to coordinate relief and rehabilitation work in the Gujarat.

Archbishop Lorenzo Baldisseri and Cardinal Ivan Dias of Mumbai have reached Bhuj even as financial assistance from church organisation continued to pour in from all over the world, the church spokesman, Dominic Emmanuel, said.

Besides Rs. 30 crores in cash, food, medicines, tents, blankets and clothes sanctioned through various offices of the church organisation *Caritas*. — PII

THE HINDU

3 FEB 2001

# Cong asks Centre to justify ceasefire

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, January 24 *HT 13*

THE CONGRESS today asked the Government to explain its objective in extending the truce in the wake of resurgence of militancy in the valley. It said it would not allow security forces to be treated like 'lame-duck targets' when militant activities were on the rise.

Though the party had supported the ceasefire extension on previous two occasions, it now feels that the government is carrying it too far. A Congress delegation headed by Dr Manmohan Singh will call on Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to find out what the Government achieved by the truce and what it hoped to gain by its extension.

Senior leader Pranab Mukherjee said that the Congress would support any move to restore peace in the valley. HE accused the Government of being 'confused' about the issue and hence sending wrong signals to the people and even the NDA allies.

<sup>25</sup> He said the government owed them a convincing explanation on "what it has achieved and what it would like to achieve through various stages of ceasefire".

The Congress reaction comes a day after party president Sonia Gandhi warned the Government to act with caution in Kashmir in view of the "serious negative experiences in the past".

Mukherjee lamented that the Congress was never consulted on the ceasefire question contrary to Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh's claims that all parties had been taken into confidence before a decision was taken.

"We supported the ceasefire extension on the previous two occasions. Now that the Government has extended it for the third time it should take the people and other parties into confidence on what its objectives are," he said.

Soon after the announcement of the ceasefire extension, the party's Kashmir group met here yesterday to take stock of the situation.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 JAN 2011

Fr-12  
29/11

# Hitting an all time low

g-f-family

## DIPLOMACY

K.P. NAYAR

**T**he Indian foreign service has become the envy of the world: for the wrong reason. From Australia to Argentina, from Moscow to the backyard island capital of Male, diplomats are beginning to harbour a secret wish to be in the IFS. The reason: you can get away with anything in this elite service provided you know what you want and have the right strings to pull in New Delhi. Not since Rajiv Gandhi arrogated to himself the effrontery to dismiss the foreign secretary, A.P. Venkateswaran, at a nationally televised press conference, has the IFS faced a crisis of confidence of the kind that it is facing now.

Because a few members of the IFS are getting away with anything, in violation of both rules and standards of decency, morale among Indian diplomats is at an all-time low. To say that morale is non-existent in Indian chanceries across the world — not to speak of South Block — would be a more accurate description of Indian diplomacy today. The irony is that such a sorry state of affairs has come about at a time when India, under the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government, has notched up the most impressive foreign policy gains in the country's half-century-plus of independence.

Worse, it has come under a dispensation in which the prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has a long and distinguished record in handling external affairs. What is more, in Jaswant Singh, India has a foreign minister with whom his counterparts from Tokyo to Washington feel comfortable. Foreign leaders do not hesitate to admit that Singh is the first Indian foreign minister in a long, long time who can grasp or go beyond the brief prepared by his South Block aides and tell these leaders something that they would want to remember or act upon after a meeting.

It would be logical to ask why anyone should, therefore, complain about morale in the IFS. The work that the diplomats are supposed to do is, after all, being done the way it should be done, the objectives of Indian diplomacy are being achieved: so nothing else should matter. Such an argument is fallacious if the situation in South Block is put in context. The BJP-led government assumed office with unprecedented goodwill among India's diplomatic personnel.

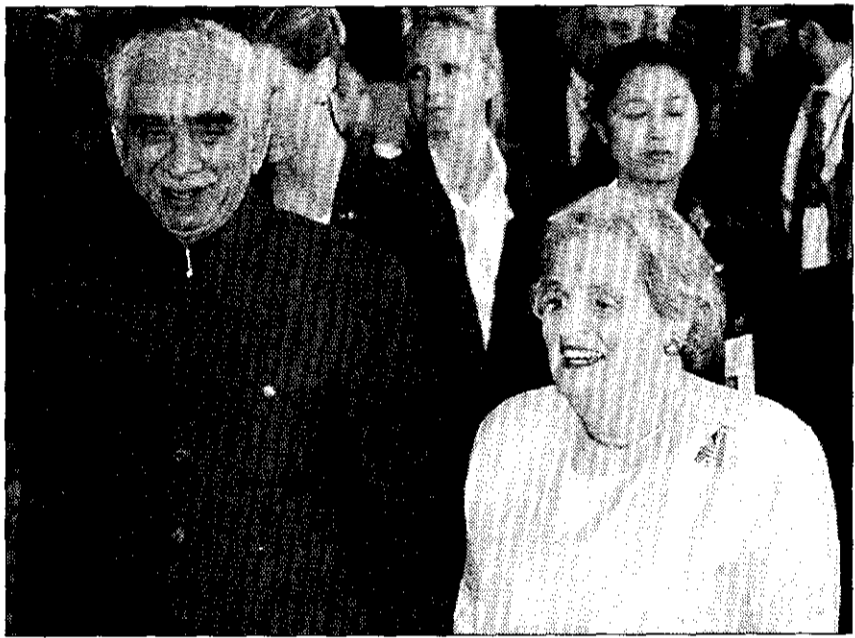
**T**his columnist cannot help recalling scenes in South Block in the days immediately after December 6, 1992. The P.V. Narasimha Rao government had summoned to New Delhi most of its key ambassadors from their stations, to be briefed on the Ayodhya demolition. A.N. Verma, then principal secretary to the prime minister, was to lend an ear to these ambassadors and brief them on what they should do in the capitals where they were stationed. But days passed, and aptly reflecting the confusion in the Rao government at that time, Verma had no idea of what to tell them. In the absence of any briefing, the envoys huddled in South Block in the rooms of their respective joint secretaries. Naturally, all the talk was about Ayodhya.

Not many of them viewed the events

of December 6 through the same prism as their former colleague, Mani Shankar Aiyar, notwithstanding the Congress culture which had been carefully nurtured in the IFS over four decades. Few of them thought India had crossed the Rubicon when the disputed structure at Ayodhya was demolished. Indeed, in discussions off the record, the opinion of the majority of Indian envoys present in South Block in those momentous days converged with those expressed by L.K. Advani. This is not to say that these civil

ee government turned around its nuclear policy both in Washington and in New York should go down in the history of diplomacy as a lesson for future generations of mandarins. And these twin-successes had a chain reaction in other capitals as far as the nuclear issue was concerned.

But this success, it turns out, has been achieved at a great cost and South Block is now paying for it. The Vajpayee government paid so much attention to New York and Washington that it com-



**South Block's dealings with the world outside White House and the UN, post Pokhran II, has been sorely devoid of vision**

servants were closet BJP men: it is doubtful if many of them would have voted for the BJP had not Vajpayee been the party's prime ministerial candidate.

But they were pragmatists who wanted to put their best foot forward for India. When the BJP came to power in 1998 and exploded the nuclear bomb, the goodwill in the IFS for the new government turned into pride, in spite of the hostile challenge that Indian envoys faced abroad as a result of Pokhran II.

Then came Kargil and Indian diplomats did a commendable job of not only making India's version of events heard, but also accepted in the most unlikely capitals of the world. If the line of control in Kashmir — which is merely a euphemism for the ceasefire line — is today accepted by all the leading members of the international community as sacrosanct, much of the credit for this goes to the IFS. What is it, then, that turned a situation tailor-made for success so sour and so suddenly? Why is it that rules in South Block are being flouted as never before, rendering administration virtually redundant?

To start with, the government got carried away by the successes it has had with the Clinton administration in Washington and at the United Nations in New York. No doubt, the way the Vajpay-

pletely neglected the rest of the world. Notwithstanding the successful spin that the ministry of external affairs has given to its various foreign policy initiatives in the media, South Block's dealings with the world outside White House and the UN headquarters in the post Pokhran II phase has been sorely devoid of vision.

A former prime minister, whose record in foreign policy is outstanding, recently compared his achievements to those of the BJP-led government in a conversation with this columnist. "When I achieved something in external affairs", he said, "I always underplayed that success. But this government, even when it has nothing to show, tom-toms everything as an unprecedented achievement". This ex-prime minister reflected, with the wisdom of hindsight,

that perhaps his policy was politically unwise, but he had no doubt at all that he was morally right and was acting in the best interests of the country.

**T**he gradual erosion of its vision after overcoming the Pokhran II challenge, indeed, the complete absence of policy deprived the IFS of the motivation and zeal with which India's diplomatic personnel had begun its engagement of the BJP's South Block. The turning point came when the Vajpayee government surrendered to terrorists in Kandahar: This surrender shattered the illusion in Indian chanceries across the world that the government led by the BJP was any different from its predecessors. The next and more recent turning point was the choice of the new foreign secretary. The political leadership had the opportunity to stem the rot and arrest the slide by bringing in as the head of the IFS someone who had the vision and the experience to restore morale among its diplomats and impart a sense of purpose to the functioning of South Block.

Moreover, with a large number of retirements, the government had a rare chance to refashion the MEA in a new image. The opportunity to do the former was lost when Vajpayee and Singh gave in to political correctness and decided that discretion was the better part of valour in taking on a discontented section of the IFS. The latter effort became a non-starter when senior diplomats, reading the writing on the wall, resolved that they would not move to Delhi and be tainted by working under a foreign secretary, who is easily the most ill-equipped in the entire history of the IFS for the job. Even a cursory look at her *curriculum vitae* will show that there are joint secretary level officers in the MEA who have done more substantive work than the incoming foreign secretary.

Who knows, now that the challenge of nuclearization is behind it, the government perhaps wants to reduce the MEA to a mere passport-issuing post. After all, the new foreign secretary's expertise has been in the passport office, the coordination division and the Kuwait compensation cell where she spent the bulk of her time in Delhi.

If only the prime minister's office had taken the unconventional, but wise, step of talking to the staff at the Indian embassy in Dublin, where she is currently posted, it would not have succumbed to the temptation to be politically correct in making Chokila Iyer the head of IFS. Since her appointment was out of the blue, virtually every Indian mission has been tapping its counterpart in Dublin in recent weeks to find out what stuff the new foreign secretary is made of.

**T**he stories that have been told have caused unease in the IFS. If someone who cannot manage a small mission in Dublin can successfully run South Block and its 120-plus missions abroad for the next 13 months — not to mention the challenge of interacting with the rest of the Indian government and key foreign countries — it will be a miracle that deserves unalloyed praise.

# Engagement with Saudi Arabia not aimed at Pak: Jaswant

By C. Raja Mohan

RIYADH, JAN. 21. India's new engagement with Saudi Arabia is aimed at expanding the bilateral relationship and not directed at Pakistan, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh asserted today.

Responding to a question at a press conference here on Pakistan's reported concerns about his visit here, Mr. Singh said any such apprehensions "would be misreading India's intention and belittling the wisdom of the Saudi leadership". At the end of the first-ever trip by an Indian Foreign Minister to the desert Kingdom, Mr. Singh said, "my visit to Saudi Arabia stands on its own, and is not directed at any third country".

Sounding upbeat after his two-days of talks with the Saudi leadership, Mr. Singh said his interaction was a "forerunner of a new era of bilateral cooperation with Saudi Arabia". Informed sources in the Indian delegation said the much-delayed engagement with Saudi leadership might have begun to generate a better understanding here of India's security

concerns. Mr. Singh was effusive about the warm hospitality extended by the Saudi leadership and said his visit had been "most productive and rewarding". A senior official said "there was not single negative vibration" in the talks between Mr. Singh and the Saudi leaders. The official Indian assessment is that "an important first step" had been taken towards "a sustained and long-term engagement" with Saudi Arabia.

Asked if he had urged the Saudi leadership to exercise a moderating influence on Pakistan, Mr. Singh said "it was not for me to suggest which country plays what role". The Foreign Minister said he discussed cross-border terrorism and Afghanistan, but did not go into the details of his "privileged communication" with the Saudi leaders.

Mr. Singh said India's ties with Israel figured in his conversation and came up in the context of New Delhi using its influence to promote a peace process in the Middle East. He reaffirmed India's commitment to the legitimate rights of the Palestinians.

Both India and Saudi Arabia are convinced

that the security of the sub-continent and the Arabian peninsula is interlined and that terrorism and violence are unacceptable. They agreed that peaceful solutions should be found for all outstanding conflicts in the region through dialogue.

In his address later to the local chambers of commerce, Mr. Singh acknowledged "there is considerable concern in Saudi Arabia about the state of India-Pakistan relations".

Mr. Singh declared India's readiness to resume the dialogue with Pakistan. But for a meaningful dialogue, he insisted, Pakistan "must demonstrate its commitment" to the Shimla and Lahore agreements and "effectively end its support for cross-border terrorism".

In his address to the Saudi businessmen, Mr. Singh invited the kingdom "to join India in a partnership that will take our ancient relationship to new heights where we jointly endeavour to combat extremism, strengthen the regional security system, reconcile differences through dialogue and engagement, and promote bilateral relations".

THE HINDU

22 JAN 2011



# Foreign service chokes on Chokila

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Jan. 21: Chokila Iyer's appointment as foreign secretary was aimed at stemming dissatisfaction in the ministry. But it appears to have given rise to a new problem, choking the movement of senior diplomats at the top.

Iyer is India's first woman diplomat to get the top job in the elite service. Having lost the race for the chair as a result of the government's politically correct move, several senior diplomats are reluctant to leave their present posts and take up new assignments.

Senior diplomats in several key missions like France, London, Berlin and Geneva are averse to moving out, creating a bottleneck in the ministry's flow

of appointments.

One such diplomat is Kanwal Sibal, ambassador to France. Sibal was one of the hot favourites to replace Lalit Mansingh as foreign secretary. But after Iyer's appointment, Sibal has shown little interest in returning to Delhi.

The ambassador was to come to South Block and take over from secretary (east) K.V. Rajen on his retirement in March and wait his turn for the foreign secretary's chair. But Sibal has made it clear that he was in no mood to return and preferred to be in Paris where his tenure is not yet over.

This has put paid to Savitri Kunnadi's relocation plans from Geneva to Paris. Kunnadi, heading the Indian Permanent Mission in Geneva, was slated to take over as ambassador in France. As

a sop, she was offered a posting at The Hague, which she promptly turned down. Kunnadi has decided to bide her time in Geneva till something more promising comes her way.

Though Mansingh will be going to Washington as India's ambassador soon after retirement, another former foreign secretary, K. Raghunath, has not been so lucky.

Raghunath was Berlin-bound to take over from Ronen Sen, who, in turn, was to go to London as the high commissioner. But the flow has been broken as Nareshwar Dayal, the incumbent in London, has managed to get an extension and will not vacate the post till the end of the year.

The chain-reaction set off by Iyer's appointment has also made R.S. Kalha, secretary (west),

change his mind about going to Canada as India's ambassador. He has more than a year in the service, but indications are that he will continue in the headquarters rather than take up his post in Ottawa.

Satish Chandra, another senior diplomat who retires in the middle of next year, has decided to stay on as secretary in the National Security Council.

But the decision to grant extensions to senior diplomats are taken arbitrarily. While Dayal has been given two extensions to stay on in London till the end of the year, other senior diplomats have been turned down.

Rajen and S.T. Deware, secretary (economic relations), will be retiring within a few months and neither has been given extensions.

THE TELEGRAPH

22 JAN 2001

## Series of posting flip-flops lands MEA in a mega mess

appointment as Foreign Secretary found a mention in the file sent to President K.R. Narayanan seeking approval for Konadi's transfer to Paris. It was an unusual move which led to an equally unusual meeting between senior Foreign Service officials and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Sibal would have superceded as many as 22 officers of both the 1964 and 1965 batches, four of whom were posted right here in Delhi. An IFS delegation of affected officials, led by Secretary (West) R.S. Kala, submitted a memorandum of protest to Vajpayee. And Sibal lost out.

The confusion that seems to have gripped the decision-makers in the MEA has affected others as well. Additional Secretary P.L. Goel was sounded out for Egypt. Now S.J. Singh is being sent there instead. The High Commissioner in Canada, Rajnikant Verma, was tipped for Thailand. Now the Ministry has changed its mind and settled on Leela Ponappa.

Ponappa was herself a victim of her bosses' flips. She was done out of a posting to Washington as Deputy Chief of Mission although her transfer orders were issued. Instead of her, the MEA packed off Alok Prasad from the Americas desk despite the fact that it had sought and received the agreement from the Mauritius Government for Prasad.

Ronnen Sen is a fellow sufferer. His agreement papers had been prepared by the Ministry for

his move to London. They were cancelled at the last minute on grounds of "ill health". Now he's been asked to stay on in Berlin for a year. Consequently, former Foreign Secretary K. Raghunath, who was sounded out for the posting in Germany, is in limbo.

The High Commissioner in London, Naresh Dayal, was to retire on December 31, 2000. First, he was given a four-month extension till Sen took over. Now that Sen's appointment stands cancelled, Dayal has been given an additional extension of eight months till the Ministry takes a decision on the next High Commissioner to the UK.

Sen was actually a victim of IFS politics with an influential lobby within the Service working overtime through BJP connections to kill his posting to London. The campaign against him got so dirty that anonymous letters making unsubstantiated allegations were circulated in the Ministry and the PMO.

The confusion over postings seems to have outstripped the confusion over policy that prevailed after the Pokharan tests. Insiders blame much of the fiasco on the move to make Sibal Foreign Secretary. They feel the decision-makers should have been told that it would be unprecedented and inadvisable to supercede so many officers. Once the Sibal decision was overturned, a vital link in the transfer chain snapped and sent the whole thing into a spin.

INDIAN EXP .ESD

23 JAN 2001

# Importance of Track II

**A**MONG the regular winter migrants to Delhi, fleeing from colder climes, are a flock of eminent practitioners of Track II diplomacy. This season, as in so many past seasons, these expected visitors are thick on the ground, easily spotted in the central areas of the nation's capital.

There they mix readily with the numerous, and increasing, local species who share their tastes and interests, and they engage in well established processes of debate and discussion with their counterparts.

The subjects they cover comprise a regular and almost unvarying agenda, with Indo-Pakistani, Indo-US and Sino-Indian relations, nuclear matters, Kashmir and bilateral trade prominent among them. Such Track II activity attracts considerable attention and raises a number of issues of more than passing interest.

Some observers are frankly sceptical about the utility of this exercise, and the many similar ones, maintaining that they lead nowhere and their chief use is no more than to promote another round of similar talks, in a seasonally salubrious location.

Nor do such observers fail to note, *apropos* of the personnel involved, their readiness to do a volte-face after leaving office and become critics of policies they have spent a lifetime in pro-

moting.

Others criticise Track II as a means of putting into circulation extraneous ideas and concepts, thus indirectly deflecting public policy into new channels.

Such views serve as a reminder that meetings of diplomats and ex-diplomats, on whatever track they may be journeying, can so easily raise suspicion about the real purpose of their getting together.

In truth, Track II as we have it is neither trivial nor sinister. It has its own processes which are far removed from regular diplomacy and serve a different purpose. Neither side in such an exercise has to bring any formal position to the table: there is nothing to negotiate, no search for a solution, or even a conclusion.

Experts and policy study groups with different national and professional backgrounds are brought together, and when well-informed and experienced individuals share their thinking, they can provide a useful supplement to the official channel, which is the Track I of this multi-track activity.

The links between the two tracks are indirect but they can have their own significance.

Indo-US exchanges of this

informal nature have been regarded as especially positive, perhaps because the participants come out of two hyper-active capital cities that are constantly in flux and whose ways are not easy for outsiders to follow.

Of particular current interest are the preoccupations attendant on the changeover in the US administration.

Track II discussions can on occasion permit especially knowledgeable individuals and private groups to beat a trail for reluctant governments to follow.

Something of this was seen when for years the experts from India's Centre for Policy Research joined Bangladeshi counterparts in trying to devise a solution for the Farakka issue.

At a time when the two governments were incapable of moving beyond deadlock, the scholars kept studying and re-studying the issue, seeking ways of solving it once and for all.

Their precise formulations may not have given the ultimate solution, but their untiring effort brought it closer.

Our present lack of direct communication with Pakistan has given a certain cachet to the informal exchanges and conversations between quasi-academic institutions in the two countries.

Even at times when the regular channels were not as choked as they are today, the Track II effort between these two served to attract genuine expectation.

The Neemrana Group of Indian and Pakistani experts is one of the first and possibly the best known of such groups, and it has laboured for well over a decade on the problems that continue to bog us down. It has been a brave effort that has encouraged others.

In Indo-Pakistani affairs, it seems that even if the governments remain aloof,

private groups have a great incentive to seek each other out, to share their experiences and to try to define the common ground between them.

This is seen not only in gatherings of mandarins, but also in the growing people-to-people effort under strongly committed leadership that brings together significant sections of the two societies.

Track II is bound to attract less notice as a quasi-diplomatic activity when there is frequent direct communication between states.

But one should expect contact between policy groups to strengthen and be regarded as a useful element in the formulation of foreign policy.

The problems that foreign offices have to cope with are often too complex to be handled by a group of officials who are constantly running to put out the latest brushfire.

Some of the think tanks active in policy analysis and on the second track are those best able to provide policy makers with analyses and proposals that can aid informed decision making.

Traditionally, India has not been fond of involving outside agencies in such activity but under the pressure of events, a greater interaction between government and policy institutes seems to be in the making.

The nuclear issue for one, with a vast literature and a specialised demand on those in authority, can hardly be addressed without the detailed effort for which top officials are too hard pressed to find the requisite time.

Networking between existing Track II institutions will benefit all of them and provide a more solid underpinning to the policy choices before the authorities.

Thus, we should expect the incentives for the annual migration to Delhi to remain strong, and with it a deeper engagement between the many specialists involved.

(The author is a former Foreign Secretary.)

## WIDE ANGLE

SALMAN HAIDAR

## 100 YEARS AGO

TODAY

JANUARY 21, 1901

### Brahmo Samaj Anniversary

**I**N celebration of the seventy-first anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj a series of services, etc, will be held every day up to the end of the month. Tomorrow there will be addresses at the Albert Hall, and on Thursday, the 24th, the Ananda Bazaar for ladies will be held at Lily Cottage, and on the following day for gentlemen. On the 28th instant a Nagar Sankirtan party will start from Colootola at 4 P.M.; the anniversary services and meetings closing on the last day of the month with solitary communion and benediction at Lily Cottage.

THE STATESMAN

21 JAN 2001

# Jaswant's visit may boost ties between India, Saudi Arabia <sup>9.8 pm</sup>

By Seema Guha

NEW DELHI: External affairs minister Jaswant Singh's trip to Saudi Arabia beginning on Friday is being billed here as an important political visit, adding a new dimension to existing ties between India and the most important kingdom in the Gulf region.

India-Saudi contacts have flourished with minimal prodding by the two governments. The relationship has been mainly an economic give and take. Saudi Arabia needs manpower for much of its unskilled jobs. It is a country with just around 21 million people. Over one million Indians work in Saudi Arabia, the majority from Kerala and other southern states. Indians form the largest expatriate population in the kingdom and send back nearly \$4



Jaswant Singh

billion home annually.

India buys over 25 per cent of its petroleum requirement from Saudi Arabia. "Commercial and economic ties as well as people to people contacts have developed well over the years, but political ties have not grown at the same pace. The minister's visit will hopefully fill this gap," an Indian official said.

Mr Jaswant Singh's visit will be the first high-level visit of a minister of the BJP-led NDA government. He will have detailed discussions with Saudi foreign minister Prince Saud al-Faisal and call on Crown Prince Abdullah. A meeting with the King is also on the cards, though it has not yet been finalised.

India and Saudi Arabia are expected to sign two agreements during the visit. One will be on combating drug-trafficking, the other on foreign office consultations.

Regular foreign office consultations between New Delhi and Riyadh could help clear doubts and suspicions about each other. A

major concern for Saudi Arabia and other Arab states in the region has been the NDA-government's ties with Israel. Despite India's reassurances that there will not be any nuclear co-operation between Israel and New Delhi, the suspicion and unease remains.

Senior Saudi journalists, in India recently, frankly admitted this. "We are worried about India's new found friendship with Israel. We know that Israel has nuclear weapons and we are nervous about India and Israel working together on nuclear issues," a senior editor of an Arabic newspaper said.

They said the people of Saudi Arabia will take time to adjust to India and Israel's growing ties. The group of journalists also said that the plight of Muslims in Kashmir was of great concern to the Saudis. Talking of India and Pakistan, the journalists clearly said that as Pakistan was an Islamic country, the sympathy of the people in case of an India-Pakistan confrontation were with Pakistan.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

19 JAN 2001

# Govt. should rethink decision on <sup>off-pm</sup> ceasefire: BJP

By Our Special Correspondent 18/1

NEW DELHI, JAN. 17. The Bharatiya Janata Party is of the view that if the kind of violence unleashed by Pakistan-based terrorists, seen here and in Kashmir over the last few weeks, continues, "it may not be worthwhile for India to take further unilateral steps" towards establishing peace and trying to find a solution to the Kashmir tangle.

Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, vice-president and spokesperson, today said that before taking a decision on extending the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir, which lapses on January 26, the Government will have to make a "serious assessment of the situation."

In the BJP's view "Pakistan's response has not been adequate" and the attack on the Red Fort, the threat to the Prime Minister's Office, unsuccessful attempt on the life of the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, and the recent attempt to storm the Srinagar airport by the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba showed that "Pakistan was not serious about peace and resumption of a dialogue with India," and there was "no proper reciprocation by Pakistan to India's peace efforts."

The Government must ask itself whether it was worthwhile to continue the peace efforts in the absence of evidence to establish Pakistan's interest in carrying this process forward. At the same time, the party was not willing to say that the ceasefire must not be extended for, only the Government could make a correct assessment as it had all the information necessary for a review of the situation.

Mr. Krishnamurthi took objection to the stand of the Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who reportedly told the Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad, Mr. Vijay Nambiar, that the resumption of a dialogue was the best way to tame militancy. If by this he meant that Pakistan was not willing to control terrorist organisations operating from its soil or that it was unable to do so, it was a "sad reflection on Pakistan."

There was no doubt that terrorist organisations

based in and backed by Pakistan had been responsible for a series of incidents calculated to wreck the peace efforts of India. Despite this, the Government had not been provoked, for it had to keep in mind that the people of the State wanted peace to be given every chance.

The party spokesperson said the incidents of violence did not reflect incompetence of the Ministry of Home Affairs or failure of intelligence. Attacks by suicide squads could take place any time, and in the handling of the latest incident at the Srinagar airport, the security agencies had responded well.

## Withdraw ceasefire, says Jayalalitha

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, JAN. 17. While condemning the attack on the Srinagar airport by militants, the AIADMK general secretary, Ms. Jayalalitha, today called for the withdrawal of the unilateral ceasefire in Kashmir. "The ceasefire has proved to be counter-productive," she told reporters.

The attack on the airport was a "sad commentary" on the state of preparedness of the security forces. "This shows how vulnerable the security of our nation is today." Despite reports of the possibility of such an attack, no action was taken to prevent it.

On the Army Chief's statement favouring extension of ceasefire, she said she did not know on what basis he had made such a remark. The AIADMK did not have access to any confidential information. Based on media reports, the ceasefire appeared to be counter-productive.

The BJP-led Government at the Centre was not serious enough about national security. The ceasefire appeared to be "unwise." Referring to the attacks on the Red Fort and the Srinagar airport, she said the Centre should wake up to the fact and call off the ceasefire. On the proposal to initiate talks with Pakistan, she said it appeared to be under the influence of external agencies like the United States.

THE HINDU

18 JAN 2001

## Jaswant to tour Germany, Saudi

NEW DELHI, Jan. 16. — The foreign minister, Mr Jaswant Singh will visit Germany and Saudi Arabia in an attempt to consolidate India's relationship with these countries. A wide-range of bilateral and international issues will be discussed during his visit.

Signs of intensified diplomatic exchanges are evident from the fact that the Union home minister, Mr LK Advani, will also be visiting Germany next month. This would be the first-ever visit by an Indian home minister to that country. Germany had criticised the Pokhran tests in 1998. The situation has changed following a pronounced US tilt towards India. Germany now wants to hold bilateral talks with India on various issues.

Mr Jaswant Singh's visit to Saudi Arabia is also very significant. Saudi Arabia has been very close to Pakistan. In context of India's relationship with Pakistan over the Kashmir issue, the foreign minister's visit assumes added importance. Besides, India imports the bulk share of crude oil from the country. — SNS

THE STATESMAN

17 JAN 2001

119-14  
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# PM hopeful of solution to border row with China

Jr Panu  
K Panu

By Amit Baruah

**BALI, JAN. 15.** The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, on Sunday said he was hopeful that a "satisfactory solution" would emerge in the boundary dispute with China. "Talks are going and maps are now being exchanged," he said at a press conference here.

On the visit of the Chinese leader, Mr. Li Peng, to India the Prime Minister said he had met with Mr. Li earlier as well. "Mr. Li is correct in saying that there should be trust between the two countries."

Asked about the supply of missiles by China to Pakistan while talking about the boundary dispute, the Prime Minister said when old ties were taking new shape and new relations were being formed, "such contradictions will come and we have to deal with them". "But wherever our neighbour Pakistan gets its arms from, we keep telling those (supplier) nations that whatever be your intention, these weapons, experience has shown, have been used against us," Mr. Vajpayee said. The Indian position had had some impact as well.

## New initiative on J&K?

He also indicated that a new initiative was in the pipeline on Pakistan and Kashmir. Asked about the new approach towards Islamabad, the Prime Minister said: "Wait for some more time."

The tango with the Hurriyat, the group's visit to Pakistan and an eventual India-Pakistan dialogue all appear to be on Mr. Vajpayee's agenda even while public criticism of Pakistan for fomenting terrorism continues.

On the suspension of operations against the militants, the Prime Minister said: "So far, the experience has been mixed. While people have welcomed the ceasefire, people want peace... there are certain elements in Pakistan which have developed a vested interest in terrorism. Unfortunately, they are continuing

with their violent activities. The question whether the ceasefire would be further extended or not will be decided later on when I reach Delhi."

His visits to Vietnam and Indonesia were "successful" and the traditional relationship strengthened further. "We have a common culture, full of diversity. In modern times, these relations were given a new form when countries in the region fought against imperialism."

## Summit with ASEAN

Asked about a separate ASEAN-India Summit, the Prime Minister said: "We have raised this question and we hope that in the very near future, this proposal will materialise."

Speaking about the 1955 Bandung Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement, the Prime Minister said new leaderships had emerged both in Indonesia and in Vietnam. "And I have been able to establish new relations with them." He was surprised that the Vietnamese leadership still remembered his visit to 1979 when the conflict between Vietnam and China escalated. Vietnam had alleged that it had been attacked and China made another charge. "But I ended my visit. I cut short the visit midway. This was a way of expressing our policy against the attack. This the leaders of Vietnam still remember."

The Prime Minister stressed that there had been a "continuity" in India's foreign policy which had helped renew its relations with Indonesia and Vietnam.

Indonesian leaders had informed him that when his visit was being planned and he was coming here in his capacity as the Prime Minister of a "democratic coalition", in which the BJP was the principal partner, some "friends of Indonesia" wanted to know why Mr. Vajpayee was being invited.

"*Woh toh secular nahin hain* (he is not secular)," it was said about him, the Prime Minister

told reporters. Speaking in the predominantly Hindu island of Bali, the Prime Minister quoted Indonesian leaders as saying that they knew what he (Mr. Vajpayee) was. ("*Ham jaante hain woh kya hain*," the Prime Minister added).

"After Indonesia the largest number of Muslims live in India. And we have ancient ties (with Indonesia). In the world's changed scenario, I give a lot of importance to my visit. After this, I have a plan to visit Japan and Malaysia," he said.

The Prime Minister's reference to the Indonesian leadership's perception seemed to be an effort to put forward his "secular" credentials, a point he had made in his "Kumarakom musings" as well.

Several countries in the region were troubled by the problem of terrorism. Fundamentalism was raising its head in some nations — even governments of "Muslim countries" were concerned about the issue.

## 'No defence pact'

Referring to security cooperation with Vietnam and Indonesia, the Prime Minister said talks on the issue had been going on and there was agreement on military training as well. "But, there is no question of a formal security pact," the Prime Minister stated. "No defence pact has been agreed to."

Asked about the VHP's plans to construct a temple at the spot the Babri Masjid once stood, he said the Vishwa Hindu Parishad was an "independent organisation" and took its own decisions, set its own dates.

On the imposition of Central rule in West Bengal, the Prime Minister said he was not in a position to make a judgment. "I am not in a position to make any judgment from here. There is a demand (for Article 356), but the question will be decided in Delhi after I consult my other colleagues."

THE HINDU

4 11 2001

# India, China agree to expedite progress on LAC clarification

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 15 JANUARY

CHINA MAY finally overcome its traditional foot-dragging on the boundary dispute with India. During his half-hour long meeting with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Monday morning, Li Peng, chairman of the Chinese National People's Congress, said he was "satisfied" at the progress in the Line of Actual Control (LAC) clarification, both sides promising to expedite the process. However, Mr Vajpayee cautioned that the resolution had to be reasonable and just.

Multipolarity and economic globalisation being the current Chinese mantra this time round, Mr Li lost no time in articulating the Chinese stand on these issues with Mr Vajpayee. On his part, Mr Vajpayee said India and China should cooperate on behalf of the developing world in the WTO. China is poised to join the WTO soon and a global opinion is being sought to be created to restart a fresh round of trade talks.

The positive tone for Monday morning's talks was set by Mr Vajpayee who, in a statement on arrival from Indonesia on Sunday, said: "As two great civilisations and neighbours, India and China are engaged in the process of resolving, and putting behind us, past differences and forging a new and dynamic relationship for the



A NEIGHBOUR AT HAND: Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and China's Li Peng in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

21st century for the benefit of our two countries and the world."

The Sino-Indian joint economic group (JEG) was revived last year after five years, armed with time-bound programmes. The two countries have agreed to strengthen co-operation in infrastructure like power, energy, transportation and telecommunication.

An invitation to Mr Vajpayee to visit China that was handed over by Mr Li was in line with an agreement to promote a greater number of high-level visits between the two countries.

However, the next high-level visit from China is probably going to be the economic reforms-friendly premier, Zhu Rongji.

Significantly, there appeared to be no mention of the thorny issues in the bilateral relationship like China's missile proliferation record or even its insistence as recent as last year on India obeying the UN Security Council Resolution 1172.

China's greater enthusiasm to clarify the boundary is in line with its policy over the past couple of years to identify and demarcate its boundaries.

*The Economic Times*

16 JAN 2001



# The Hindustan Times

## Eastern eye

INDIAN FOREIGN policy has undergone a paradigm change. While India has distanced itself from the typical Third World policy stances of the Eighties and early Nineties, its profile in the international system has grown visibly in the past few years. The global change in the past few years and changes in India's strategic environment account for the country's new international profile. The current Indo-US waltz is not the only positive aspect of Indian foreign policy. A major shift is also discernible towards Asia. East Asia and South-east Asia have been blipping prominently on the radar screen of our foreign policy for some years now. Myanmar, Vietnam and Indonesia have become integral to India's 'Look East' policy. Initiated by the Narasimha Rao Government in the early Nineties, the policy is currently being pursued vigorously by the Vajpayee Government. In doing so, the country has given paramount importance as much to its economic interests as to its national security and strategic imperatives. A commonality of interests brought India and Indonesia together during the initial phase of non-alignment. However, this convergence of common goals and mutual goodwill did not reflect adequately in the trade and economic fields. Mr Vajpayee's visit to Indonesia has not only reaffirmed the closeness of ties between the two countries but has also brought into sharper focus India's keen interest in forging ties with the South-east Asian countries which are witnessing rapid economic growth.

Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit to Indonesia is in fact a return trip to President Abdurrahman Wahid's visit to India last year. Indonesia is the largest Muslim State in the world and President Wahid has so far made the most forthright denunciation of religious fundamentalism. Like India, Indonesia is also wrestling with separatist violence. There are many challenges in the economic and security spheres which the two countries have pledged to deal with. India is willing to share its development and nation-building experiences with Indonesia. Mr Vajpayee's visit has paved the way for forging meaningful ties with East Asia.

While there is imperative need to nurture Indo-Indonesian ties, it would be unrealistic to expect Jakarta to unequivocally support the Indian stand on Kashmir. Even on the question of India's interests in joining ASEAN, President Wahid has emphasised the interactions between SAARC and ASEAN. The defence cooperation agreement with Indonesia is perhaps the most significant of the five agreements signed during the Prime Minister's visit. Beijing's growing influence in the region has made some South-east Asian countries uncomfortable. While India sees a great opportunity in terms of trade expansion, it has reasons to feel positive about South-east Asian nations wanting India to play a larger, stabilising role in the region.

## Cell division

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 JAN 2001

98 to 16/1

## Big brother lands in a big mess

# Nursing the neighbours

**S**ELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS is offensive even in an individual. But it takes the form of jingoism when a nation indulges in it. New Delhi's claim that it has the best of relations with its neighbours, except Pakistan, does not tally with facts. There is so much distrust among them vis-a-vis India that even a trace of slight bubbles over into an anti-India spectacle.

Disturbances in Nepal are one example. They are a symptom, not the disease. The disease is the deep-rooted suspicion of New Delhi. Whether or not Hrithik Roshan said anything against the Nepalese is not the issue. The real problem is the alienation based on distrust.

Again, Colombo found distant Norway to communicate with the LTTE rather than neighbouring India. The feeling that certain influential forces in India are mixed up with them is so strong in the Chandrika Kumaratunga government that it wants New Delhi nowhere near the initiative. There is sufficient reason for this distrust. After all, the LTTE was once trained and armed by India. Colombo wants New Delhi's help but without looking over its shoulders.

Dhaka is disturbed that India did not give it prior warning of floods when parts of West Bengal were inundated. True, New Delhi is a victim of the hostility between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and opposition leader Khaleda Zia. But Khaleda's strength is based on the anti-India sentiment in Bangladesh. Elections are due in the country in the next few months. New Delhi should observe strict neutrality.

Most incidents between India and its neighbours are trivial but the reaction to them is intense. This is in part due to New Delhi's acts of omission and commission. True, India bashing comes in handy to them because this is the best way to cover up their own economic failings. Still New Delhi unnecessarily creates suspicion by, for instance, asking Dhaka to sell natural gas, and Kathmandu hydro-electric power.

It is in their own interest to do so. New Delhi should not raise these points.

No doubt, India's large size is a deterring factor. Fears and doubts are bound to arise. The cold war syndrome also is still there. But what takes the cake is the arrogance of Indian envoys and visitors. They have a chip on their shoulder and tend to throw their weight about. "Ugly Indian" is the phrase coined for us, just as it was once used for the Americans.

New Delhi's assistance to neighbouring countries is not to be faulted, but its behaviour should be. The obsession that we must be recognised as a regional power has clouded our thinking.



KULDIP NAYAR

**Most incidents between India and its neighbours are trivial but the reaction is intense. The obsession that we must be recognised as a regional power has clouded our thinking**

We behave as if we have already arrived when the fact is that one-third of our population is extremely poor. What we ask from our neighbours is submission or subservience, not savvy. Our biggest criticism against the US and the UK is their big brother attitude. We behave in the same manner. Watch the functioning of our foreign office and ambassadors when it comes to relations with small countries.

India's ambassador at Kathmandu is nicknamed "the Viceroy". Some of our envoys to Nepal, indeed, copied the regal, colonial style of viceroys of the Raj. Even a country like Mauritius has gone through that experience. One of our envoys thought he was a kingmaker and played havoc with local politics.

In Dhaka, a former prime minister has not been given a visa to India for more than five years because he had

the audacity to say that India should be dismembered. No doubt an irresponsible remark and, coming as it does from an ex-premier, it is all the more reprehensible. But should Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh justify the denial of a visa for such a long period? There has to be a sense of proportion.

Here I may mention the difficulties Pakistani scholars, journalists or students encounter before getting an Indian visa. True, Islamabad is cantankerous in such matters but its policy is not to let its nationals mix with Indians. Why should a liberal country like ours pursue a tit-for-tat policy when it comes to issuing vis-

sensitivity that responding to different situations demands. But the worst is the sense of superiority. Our bureaucrats make their counterparts in neighbouring countries feel small.

Late prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri selected leading public figures to serve as ambassadors to Nepal and Sri Lanka. He gave them the rank of a cabinet minister to let the countries know their importance. Shastri would say he wanted top-most Indians to represent the nation in neighbouring countries. Jaswant Singh, once in the army, has so much faith in bureaucrats that he sees no virtue in public men. Leave alone the neighbouring countries, he has appointed bureaucrats to Washington, London, Moscow and Beijing, where tall Indians once represented New Delhi.

India could have overcome the deficiencies of policy and personnel through SAARC. But from its inception in 1985, India has been wanting to be treated as number one. Islamabad too has harmed SAARC by rejecting any proposal or initiative coming from New Delhi. After General Pervez Musharraf's coup in Pakistan, India has been more intransigent than Pakistan. New Delhi has expressed its unwillingness to participate in any SAARC meeting. Recently, a minister from Sri Lanka came to New Delhi to get India's view on Colombo, the SAARC chairman, fixing a summit. India has reportedly said no. How does our attitude help neighbouring countries which feel that SAARC is one forum where they can meet as equals?

In fact, New Delhi should have by this time engaged Pakistani officials in one or the other meeting of SAARC. This may have provided us a way out of the impasse in which the two countries are stuck. The Gujral doctrine not only gave unilateral concessions to neighbouring countries but also encouraged more and more contacts with them. Because that is the only way to remove misunderstandings. Otherwise suspicions will pile up like a haystack, which may catch fire even with a stray spark.

INDIAN EXPRESS

16 JAN 2001

# India rules out bloc

## No defence pact with Russia, China'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BALI (Indonesia), Jan. 12. — India today ruled out the possibility of entering into a defence pact involving Indonesia, China and Russia and said the defence cooperation agreement, signed between New Delhi and Jakarta, mainly related to the naval field.

The pact didn't come up during discussions Mr AB Vajpayee had with the Indonesian leadership, principal secretary to the Prime Minister, Mr Brajesh Mishra told reporters here.

He dismissed as "hypothetical" Indonesian defence minister, Mr Mohammad Mahfud's reported suggestion in this regard.

When asked about discrepancies in Indonesian leaders' stand over India's claim for a permanent seat in the Security Council, Mr Mishra said: "Why do you want to minimise the importance of the Indonesian President's statement on the issue?"

Mr Abdurrehman Wahid yesterday said that he personally supported India's case. But his foreign minister was equivocal in support of New Delhi.

Mr Mishra said Mr Vajpayee's visit to Indonesia has resulted in bilateral agreements in five areas including defence cooperation and setting up a joint commission that "will push our relations to a level, perhaps not seen ever before."

Regarding the possibility of any arms sale under the defence cooperation agreement, he said: "Mainly the cooperation will be in the naval field in which both sides are interested. But that does not rule out the supply of arms."

Describing the talks as "very friendly and cordial", Mr Mishra said Mr Wahid has promised to visit India in the second half of the year. The Vice President Ms Megawati Sukarnoputri will come to New Delhi in April.

■ Mobike names rile Hindus in Bali, page 9



Mr AB Vajpayee arrives at Ngurah Rai Airport in Bali on Friday. — AP/PTI

THE STATESMAN

13 JAN 2001

## Eastern Approaches

Atal Behari Vajpayee's fruitful visit to Vietnam and Indonesia are indicators of the radical changes that have come about with the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a new international security paradigm. There is a widely held, and incorrect, impression that India had neglected the South, and hence New Delhi's need for a new 'look east' policy. What is overlooked is that South East Asia was the focus of an intense Cold War struggle. Through vigorous diplomacy, India was involved in Indonesia's liberation struggle, the decolonisation of Malaysia, and the 25-year-long anti-colonial war in the Indo-Chinese peninsula. Some South East Asian nations came under the influence of Maoist China and others sought protective links with the US. Distracted by the compulsions of the Cold War, the major players ignored the colossal genocide in Cambodia. India remained consistent in its support to decolonisation and anti-genocidal efforts. These factors, together with the need to ensure their own security, caused many South East Asian countries to distance themselves from India. Now that the Cold War is over, China has given up its Maoist adventurism, and Indo-US relations are improving significantly, South East Asian nations are responding warmly to New Delhi. This is a logical consequence of the new international security situation. The globalisation of economies and the East Asian financial crisis — which arose out of crony capitalism — have also infused a sense of realism in the region.

True to 50 years of friendship, New Delhi stood by Hanoi at the height of the Vietnam war when many of Vietnam's present partners in ASEAN were being used to sustain the conflict. In this context, the warmth of the welcome extended by Hanoi to the Indian prime minister was to be expected; Vietnam's strong support for much closer political and economic interaction between India and ASEAN is also natural. However, the most significant achievement of the prime ministerial visit was the support he gained from the Indonesian leadership for New Delhi's stand on Kashmir and terrorism, and for India's candidacy for a permanent seat in the Security Council. President Abdul Rahman Wahid has displayed remarkable statesmanship and pragmatism in dealing with the legacy of secessionism and crony capitalism which he inherited. Presiding over the world's largest Islamic country, beset with problems of religious extremism and secessionism, he is able to appreciate the mutuality of interests Indonesia has with India in countering such threats. He has also resisted chauvinist elements in his country who at one time had entertained ambitions of contesting India's claim to permanent membership of the Security Council and has allowed international political logic to run its course. Even during the Cambodian crisis, when most of ASEAN took an anti-Vietnamese line, Indonesia played a more understanding role, parallel to India's support. As such, in terms of regional security imperatives, there is a basic framework of understanding among India, Indonesia and Vietnam which could be further built upon. There is vast potential for economic cooperation among the three, particularly in the energy sector. Indonesia's secessionist ACEH province is perilously close to the Nicobars, necessitating closer defence and security co-operation between Jakarta and New Delhi. All in all, India's re-engagement with South East Asia has come not a moment too soon.

## Music as Deterrent

"Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast", wrote Shakespeare. The saying has just been put to the test. Not in the UK or in an African country but in the Wild West — at a bus station in Vallejo district of San Francisco. Crime in and around the bus station is said to have dropped dramatically ever since the local authority started playing orchestral music, including live performances of the Vallejo Symphony. Loitering and nuisance is said to have come down by half and police officer Brett Clark says there are now plans to extend broadcasts to other streets. If the Vallejo verdict is correct, could we adapt, not the music (there are enough adaptors in Bollywood already), but the concept for dealing with crime-prone streets in India? If so, what is the kind of music which could deter those indulging in loitering and nuisance in Nirad Babu's *Continent of Circe*? A Vallejo Symphony may not strike the right chord with desi loiterers. If classical music is the key, maybe Thyagaraja's *Endaro Mahanubhavulu* could be tried south of the Vindhyas this month, during the festival at Thiruvaiyaru where the composer-saint was born. The only question could be whether to broadcast the chorus of hundreds of voices raised in unison at Thiruvaiyaru or rely on just an instrumental version. Classical Hindustani music could be broadcast on the crime-prone streets of northern India and Rabindra Sangeet in the east. If one kind of music doesn't work, there is always the possibility of switching cassettes. Meera bhajans could be tried, perhaps even film-songs which have touched the hardened hearts of criminals, viz "Ai malik tere bande hum" from Shantaram's *Do Aankhein, Baara Haath*. Or even the less mournful, "Na chaahе sona, chaandi" from *Bobby*. There is also the possibility of generating employment. Reformed loiterers could be rehabilitated as disc jockeys to play the kind of music which could arouse nobler feelings among members of their erstwhile fraternity. Civic officials might, however, come back from a study tour and argue that they rely on a purely automatic system in Vallejo. The response to that could be that there is a precedent in the form of manned instant-coffee vending machines in India. It would be worthwhile to crosscheck with Vallejo whether it is the music or the sound which is deterring loiterers and those indulging in nuisance. If the latter, a local authority which has installed a musical deterrent in Salem, in Tamil Nadu might wake up one morning to find that the speakers have been swiped and that the only alternative is the sound of silence.

# Poll panel to hold elections

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 10 JANUARY

**E**LECTIONS TO the five state assemblies of Kerala, West Bengal, Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu and Assam might be held some time in April-May, Chief Election Commissioner M.S. Gill hinted on Wednesday.

"We are very much focused. There are going to be elections before the third week of May," he told reporters here on Wednesday and added that the Commission would follow its past practice of timing the polls in a manner so as to enable a new government to assume office well in time (that is, at least two weeks before expiry of term of the incumbent government).

This in effect means that the Assembly poll results for the five states would have to be out by early May so that there is enough time for government formation. March being the month for examinations, April seems the most likely choice for the EC.

While the term of assemblies



M.S. Gill: Summer project

in Tamil Nadu and Kerala expires on May 21 and 28 respectively, the tenures of West Bengal and Pondicherry assemblies come to an end on June 9. The Assam assembly completes its term on June 9.

Given the short gap between the expiry of terms of these state assemblies, Mr Gill hinted at the possibility of simultaneous polls

in five states. "The Commission has in the past tried to hold elections together since the outcome of one assembly election would have a bearing on another," Mr Gill told reporters.

Maintaining that the Commission would be extensively using electronic voting machines (EVMs) in the ensuing elections, the CEC said the Commission was trying not only to expedite the delivery of 1.5 lakh new EVMs by public sector BEL and ECIL, but was also relocating machines from states not going to polls.

Mr Gill also informed the newsmen that the EC, having completed 50 years of its existence, would be celebrating its golden jubilee on January 17 and 18. While the January 17 function will be presided over by President K.R. Narayanan, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, leader of the Opposition Sonia Gandhi and Lok Sabha speaker G.M.C. Balayogi will address the invitees.

*The Economic Times*

11 JAN 2001

# in 5 states by May

## EC not ready to be drawn into Garbeta controversy

85-2/1111 Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 10 JANUARY

**T**HE ELECTION Commission (EC), on Wednesday, excused itself from taking on an active role in checking the ongoing poll violence in West Bengal, saying, "at the moment, whatever the matters are, they lie constitutionally in other domains."

Chief election commissioner M.S. Gill, who spoke ahead of a meeting with the NDA team that visited the site of the Garbeta massacre, clarified that "the role of the EC comes only when we enter into the election process." He hinted that with Assembly Poll still away, the power to control the deteriorating law and order in West Bengal lay not with the EC but with the "state government, national government and other authorities of the State."

The EC's observation may have come as a disappointment for the NDA delegation, led by BJP MP Vijay Goel, which, on Wednesday, demanded that the EC take "immediate concrete steps" to check the climate of terror in the violence-affected villages of West Bengal, lest it "impact the coming Assembly election."

"A free and fair poll is not possible, given the state-sponsored terror in the villages of West Bengal," is what the NDA delegation is said to have conveyed to the CEC.

Mr Gill, who is closely following reports from the Left-ruled state, said that the EC did not come into the picture as yet. Election commissioner T.S. Krishnamurthy will tour West Bengal on Thursday.

*The Economic Times*

11 JAN 2001

# Rebel threat binds Delhi, Jakarta



President Abdurrahman Wahid greets Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Jakarta. (AFP)

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

Jakarta, Jan. 10: In an attempt to strengthen historic bonds with one of the co-founding members of the Non Aligned Movement (Nam), India today expressed its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Indonesia, where the democratically-elected government is facing separatist movements and a difficult time in keeping the nation together.

"Terrorism, fuelled by religious extremism and financed by drug smuggling and gun-running, threatens the very fabric of democratic societies like ours," Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said.

"Both you and we take pride in our ethnic, religious and linguistic pluralism. We have to constantly oppose external interference and subversive and separatist forces which seek to upset this equilibrium," he added.

"The stability, security and prosperity of Indonesia is important for our region," he said in his speech at a banquet hosted in his honour at the Presidential Palace. He also indicated that Delhi would do its best to ensure that Indonesia did not disintegrate.

The mood of Vajpayee's visit to Indonesia was set with President Wahid breaking protocol norms to come to the airport to welcome his Indian guest on a four-day bilateral visit.

Vajpayee's visit is the first by an Indian Prime Minister since 1986. Though former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao visited Jakarta in 1993, he had come to attend the Nam Summit.

After the ceremonial reception at the airport, Vajpayee made a courtesy call on President Wahid and Vice-President Sukarnoputri Megawati.

Having initiated the peace process in strife-torn Kashmir, Vajpayee could not have visited Indonesia at a better time. On one hand, it is a part of Delhi's attempt to strengthen relations with key members of the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (Asean),

a region where it is keen to play a much more meaningful role. On the other, it is also to identify common challenges facing India and countries like Indonesia as well as the new parameters under which bilateral relations should progress.

Vajpayee reminded the Indonesian leadership about the first Nam Summit in Bandung and the declaration made from the Indonesian soil in 1955.

"The Non-Aligned Movement was the child of Bandung consensus. The major success of the Nam lies in the protection of the sovereignty of the newly-independent countries," the Prime Minister said.

Though in the post-cold war era there are new challenges before the Nam member nations, where stress is on developing the economy for the upliftment of the people, Vajpayee added that they would also have to guard against forces, which are threatening to disintegrate the countries.

"We must work together, along with other developing countries, to impart to the globalization process a more human face and a more compassionate pace," he said.

Nam co-founders, India and In-

donesia, have had their fair share of rivalry for championing the cause of the developing nations and has resulted in several ups and downs in bilateral relations. While Jakarta under Suharto was perceived to be an ally of the West, Indonesia felt India was closer to the Soviet camp. But with Wahid's success in what is said to be the most democratic election in Indonesia, there seems to be an urgency to re-establish their commitment on mutual areas of benefit.

Indonesia is a leading oil-producing country (1.4 million barrels per day), has rich copper and gold reserves and is the largest supplier of liquefied-natural-gas (LNG). These are the areas where India is keen to cooperate with Indonesia. India, being the South Asian leader in information technology, can train Indonesians and share its expertise in agriculture, having learnt the art of being a food-surplus country despite its one billion-plus population.

Moreover, both can cooperate on defence related areas, particularly naval affairs, and ensure that the sea-lanes in Southeast Asia—a region crucial for both—remain safe.

THE TELEGRAPH

11 JAN 2001

# RAW AND MEA

Is M16 Or CIA The Model?

**T**HE reported move by the Ministry of External Affairs to seek administrative and operational control over the country's external intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing, in emulation of the British model, is unrealistic and misdirected. True, M16 reports to the British Foreign Office. But, there is no PMO in Britain of the kind we have, despite the vast increase in the Prime Minister's powers. The Foreign Office retains its autonomy. Nor is the recent restoration to the Home Ministry of its former authority over the Intelligence Bureau a good parallel. The IB was set up to work under that Ministry. Indira Gandhi later brought it under her direct control, along with Revenue Intelligence which was reporting to the Finance Ministry.

RAW was set up on 1 October 1968 to function under the PMO precisely when it began to overshadow the Ministries, the MEA included. Its charter, a mere executive order of 21 September 1968, is secret, unlike the IB's Charter or that of M16, the Intelligence Services Act, 1994.

## REQUEST

A witness to RAW's birth has vividly described the event. The then Foreign Secretary, Mr Rajeshwar Dayal, recalled in his memoir that the MEA had a Director of Security whose job was simply to keep its premises secure. "One day the Director of Security, RN Kao, came to me with a brief typewritten note and asked for my signature thereon. The request was made casually, as though it was a matter of minor routine. But one glance at the paper took me aback. It said that it had been decided to create a service for external intelligence and that External Affairs should include the names of the operatives to ensure their cover on its list of diplomatic officers. When I asked when the decision was taken I was blandly told that it had been taken by the Prime Minister! It seemed extraordinary that a far-reaching decision which so obviously and intimately concerned External Affairs should have been taken without a word of consultation with the ministry."

He wrote a note to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi about it. The matter was dropped, or, so it seemed. For he proceeds to record: "But some time thereafter a 'Research and Analysis Wing' was created, functioning directly under the Prime Minister and undercutting our old established Intelligence Bureau which was in the Home Ministry. RAW functionaries soon proliferated far and wide."

Formerly, the Director of RAW is Secretary(R) in the Cabinet Secretariat; in fact, he is an arm of the PMO reporting to the PM and his National Security Adviser. The MEA would prefer that he report to the Minister and its operatives a broad report to the concerned desk at the MEA besides their own HQs.

The MEA's proposal was made in a paper it submitted to

By AG NOORANI

the Group of Ministers, headed by the Home Minister, Mr LK Advani, which considered reports by the task forces set up in the wake of the Kargil Committee's report. It is not merely ambitious. There is something pathetic, even ludicrous, about an institution seeking powers from a source which has successfully encroached on its own assigned turf for the last three decades and reduced it to a shadow of its former self. RAW is now, along

ULFA's Commander-in-chief. "Three ULFA militants and two RAW members died in these encounters."

RAW's Director, Mr AS Dulat, retired on 31 December and was appointed officer on Special Duty in the PMO "with effect from 1 January 2001 till further orders". He is credited with considerable knowledge of Kashmir affairs and wide contacts with the state's politicians.

There has recently been an unusual spate of seminars on Kashmir which is as exceptional as it is exceptional.

Whether one uses the words of Section 13(1)(g) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 ("resources disproportionate to known sources of income") or of the more appropriate law of vagrancy (gentlemen without ostensible means of livelihood), at least a few of the organisers would eminently meet these "qualifications". RAW funding is freely offered as explanation for some of these seminars for some "think-tanks" which have

mushroomed recently, a few journals and identified front men. Some quaint ventures, in what was perversely called "Track-II diplomacy", were inspired by RAW. The CIA did no little to corrupt intellectual life within the United States itself during the Cold War. Evidently, RAW does not wish to lag behind.

## POLICY

RAW is no longer an agency that provides intelligence to decision-makers. Its chief shapes policy and also executes it. RAW sorely needs a Charter with a clearly defined remit. Two other measures are called for. One is to impart life and meaning to the National Security Council which exists only on paper. That will not happen unless there is a full-time National Security Adviser who holds no other office. The post is now held by the Principal Secretary to the PM, Mr Brajesh Mishra. As Mr K Subrahmanyam has rightly pointed out, "it is difficult to do justice" to responsibilities of both offices.

Cutting across the political divide, successive governments have done no little to undermine the autonomy, morale and, in some instances, even the integrity of the MEA. It is in sad disarray today. The Minister for External Affairs, Mr Jaswant Singh, would render a service were he to appoint a Committee to review its structure and performance with the same remit and eminent membership as the famous Pillai Committee on the Indian Foreign Service. Its Report, dated 17 October 1966, has wise words on the harmful effects of "separate autonomous areas of foreign relations activity, detached from and independent of the Foreign Office, and the right of direct access to those areas for representatives of foreign missions"

The Committee had in mind the disastrous Krishna Menon interlude. Time has invested those remarks with poignancy and greater relevance. For, far



with IB, not merely an intelligence agency and a practitioner of covert operations, but an instrument of diplomacy conducted by the PMO and successive Prime Ministers, by-passing the MEA as well as its Ministerial head.

Here, again, let a former Foreign Secretary and envoy to the country speak of how a RAW chief met its head of state without his knowledge. Mr JN Dixit records in his memoirs that RAW's Director, Mr AN Varma, met the President of Sri Lanka, Mr JR Jayawardene, on 28 April and 19 June 1988 at the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's instance. RAW, he wrote, "had become not just an intelligence and information factor but a political factor directly influencing policy in Sri Lanka since 1980." A little over a decade after its birth, RAW had become a performer in the realm of diplomacy to the detriment of the national interest.

## LIMITATIONS

For, Dixit adds, that RAW's role not only led to "inadequate coordination between our intelligence agencies and the IPKF" but — note his understatement — "resulted in operational limitations on the IPKF". Why? Because RAW was parleying with the LTTE while its men were killing the jawans of the IPKF.

M16 is forbidden to act within Britain. Only M15 can. But RAW has been freely operating within India especially in insurgency situations. On 11 August 1989, the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha asked the government to come clean about the involvement of RAW in the Bodo agitation in Assam. It cited a letter by the RAW Employees Association to the Prime Minister alleging that Rs 3 crores had been allocated by RAW for training Bodo guerrillas. Only recently, a correspondent, Utpal Parashar, reported from Guwahati on 19 December that "intelligence sources ... state that a crack team of RAW operatives ... ULFA militants



# Where big can be botherson

THE RECENT anti-India riots, sparked by a fabricated charge that the Indian actor, Hritik Roshan, made derogatory remarks about Nepal, is a reflection of the hostility with which most people in the Himalayan kingdom perceive this country. It is, however, misleading to assume that the rioting in Kathmandu was a spontaneous upsurge. A highly complex set of factors appears to be behind the street violence in the Nepali capital. The fuse was apparently lit by a combination of the underworld and the ISI which exploited the latent anti-India sentiment accumulated in Nepal over the years.

It is now a matter of record that India's street level image among its other neighbours, in Bangladesh and to a lesser extent in Sri Lanka, is not particularly positive.

Anti-India sentiment in Nepal is partly driven by history. The root of the problem lies in the settlement of Indians in the Terai region of Nepal — the agriculturally productive flatlands which border Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. "Indigenous" Nepalese residing mostly in the hill areas have resented their presence. They feel the Terai population exercises a disproportionate influence over Nepali politics and economy.

According to one estimate, around four million Indians have shifted to Nepal in the last 35 to 40 years. While Hindus are the majority, the Muslim population in the Terai is not negligible either. Nearly 97 per cent of Nepal's seven lakh Muslims reside in the Terai. While a majority of the muslims work on the farms, they also form a sizeable chunk of traders in Nepalgunj on the India-Nepal border. The Indian origin population continues to enjoy extensive links with people, some of them with questionable backgrounds, on the Indian mainland.

Migration of skilled or semi-skilled Indians or those establishing small and medium sized businesses have been treated with suspicion in Nepal in the past. In fact, concerned by the flow of Indians into Nepal, the Government in Kathmandu had set up a task force in the early 1980s to look into the "problem". The recommendations of this task force were, however, never implemented.

The presence of smugglers in large numbers in Nepal has imparted a new edge to the anti-India feelings. Kathmandu watchers point out that smuggling and prostitution have been the biggest revenue earning pursuits in Nepal over the years. In fact, there have been reports that large numbers of Nepali politicians and bureaucrats have been directly or indirectly linked to the gold

smuggling syndicates operating in the country.

Smuggling operations did not have a particularly anti-India slant in the past. But equations changed drastically after the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the subsequent retaliation spearheaded by a section of the underworld in the form of the Mumbai blasts. The Mumbai blasts, in fact, divided the underworld on communal lines. Kingpins of the Dawood Ibrahim gang migrated first to Dubai after the blasts. But as the investigations in Mumbai gathered momentum, the Government in UAE apparently found it inconvenient to prolong their stay. It was from Dubai that veterans of the Mumbai underworld shifted to Karachi and Kathmandu.

In Kathmandu, the Mumbai underworld established close contacts with the highly influential local smuggling network. Firmly anti-India, it is a section of the underworld which linked up with the Pakistani ISI network in the region and beyond. Consequently,

***For all its size, India cannot achieve its larger objectives without eliciting willing cooperation from smaller neighbours... A 'big brother' approach is entirely misplaced, writes ATUL ANEJA.***

the Nepali smugglers and their backers, while not particularly opposed to India, were dragged into the ISI network.

With the ISI-underworld nexus in place, the character of smuggling from Nepal also changed. For instance, a Sikh militant in 1998 was apprehended with 30 kg of RDX at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan airport.

The underworld-ISI network has worked against India in Nepal with determination. Investments have especially been made in the media, in order to influence public opinion. Mirza Dilshad Beg, known for his connections with the ISI, ran the influential Space-Time cable network. He was ultimately assassinated, allegedly by the Chhota Rajan gang which had emerged as a rival to Dawood after the Mumbai blasts. The Space-Time network is now reportedly headed by Jamim Shah, of ethnic Kashmiri lineage. This cable network is believed to have been involved in giving wide publicity to Hritik Roshan's alleged

remarks which acquired explosive dimensions.

India has also become useful for focalising economic frustration, especially among the Nepali youth. Not surprisingly, the students belonging to leftist organisation who took to the streets targeted commercial establishments owned by Indians. These included enterprises and cinema halls, some of which were owned by the Indian origin Marwari community. In other words, there now exists in Nepal a powerful infrastructure which can exploit the existing negativism against India.

Communalisation of the Terai, a result of the Babri Masjid demolition, is likely to expand the anti-India constituency in Nepal. According to one study, divisions between Hindus and Muslims have sharpened in some of Nepal's urban centres after 1992. The Vishwa Hindu Sangh (VHS), the Islamic Yuva Sangh (IYS) and the Muslim Ekta Sangh (MES) have contributed to this schism, which has become perceptible in Nepalgunj. It will not be surprising if the growing divide is exploited by vested interests in a manner detrimental to India's national interests.

In Bangladesh too, the undercurrent of hostility towards India is palpable. In the past, New Delhi's stand on the sharing of the Ganga waters had been a permanent rallying point which stoked the fire of anti-Indianism. Problems in border trade had also given an economic dimension to this.

Though the relationship has greatly improved after the coming to power of the Awami League Government of Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh is still hesitant about agreeing to India's key requests. India is keen to buy gas from Bangladesh and wants to acquire transit rights through the mainland to reach the Northeastern States. In both cases, Bangladesh, on account of suspicions about India at the grassroots and political level, is hesitating.

India's troubled relationship and the weak state machinery's in some of the neighbouring countries have been exploited by insurgents and their supporters. The Indian Army's Operation Rhino in Assam pushed the key leaders of the United Liberation Front of Asom to Bangladesh. The ULFA leaders since the early 1990s have reportedly visited Chang Mai in Thailand in order to obtain arms. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam who have acquired fast boats have emerged as the key couriers for taking delivery of weapons, usually in the high seas, and delivering them to the required destinations in the Northeast.

Weapons are finally fun through Cox's Bazar in and taken to Dwaki in for dispersal to the ULFA Haflong in Assam is the for delivery to the National Council of Nagaland (I

The response of the establishment to the posed by negative publ in its neighbourhood h and reactive. Part of th lies in the establishmer to craft a pragmatic ap would promote its clea larger geopolitical inter case of Nepal, India, es the Sino-Indian war, ca see the emergence of K a Chinese bastion. A Ci



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stronghold so close to political heartland will unacceptable.

While its strategic bc remains fixed, India's a approach to Nepal for needs to be radically re Indian foreign office at establishment, for insta imperially treat Nepal i protectorate.

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with the neighbours, it cannot  
achieve its larger strategic  
objectives without willing  
cooperation from its smaller  
neighbours. A clinical  
appreciation of the ground  
situation will lead to the  
conclusion that in promoting  
India's larger strategic



major player in India's energy  
security calculus. Besides, special  
relations with Bangladesh are  
required to promote India's security  
interests.

Given the complex historical,  
economic and security dimensions  
which lead to anti-Indianism in the  
neighbourhood, the Indian  
embassies and intelligence network  
have to be revamped. In the case of  
Nepal, for instance, diplomacy  
cannot remain confined to the  
Nepali elite. There is a need to take  
an ideological counter-campaign to  
the masses. For instance, India's  
standpoint has to be projected  
before the Nepali public, through a  
coherent media campaign  
conducted by dedicated  
professionals. It is unforgivable that,  
unlike Pakistan, the Indian  
establishment does not have assured  
and matching influence over a  
section of the Nepalese media to

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interests, forging equations of inter-  
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Practitioners of Indian foreign  
policy often forget that neighbouring  
countries though smaller in size do  
have a restricted but effective  
counter-leverage over New Delhi. As  
witnessed by India for over a  
decade, neighbouring countries can  
become bases for waging a  
punishing low intensity terrorist war.  
An attitudinal fixation of treating  
neighbours as inferiors,  
symptomised in a "big brother"

In the case of Bangladesh, New  
Delhi has to recognise the  
importance of its location.  
Bangladesh is the land bridge  
between South and Southeast Asia,  
where it has vital long-term  
interests. Geography therefore  
defines its importance. India to draw  
physical links with South East Asia  
may have to chart out a route  
through Bangladesh and Myanmar.  
Bangladesh which has also large  
reserves of gas is likely to become a

With Pakistan's penetration in the  
neighbourhood deepening, the need  
for synergy between the intelligence  
community and the foreign office  
establishment becomes  
indispensable. Early warning and an  
agile response will immediately help  
in defusing crises before they erupt  
on the streets.

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But in the long run, a fresh  
approach based on mutual respect  
and anchored in existing realities  
will have to be forged with neigh-  
bours.

# Win over the region first

By K. K. Katyal

*India's standing in the world and credibility as a major player will be in direct proportion to its acceptability in the region, apart from its internal strength.*

FOR THE third time in a row, the new year finds New Delhi grappling with neighbourhood challenges, varying in form but unchanged at the core — intractable. If the dawn of 1998 saw the makings of a bus diplomacy (which did not take long to come unstuck), last year began in the bitter aftermath of the hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight and now it is a ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir, rudely punctuated with terrorist strikes. The dealings with Pakistan posed serious problems in all the three cases, and there is a worrying addition this time — the bursting into the open of anti-India sentiments in Nepal.

There is a case for a thorough analysis of the how and why of it. Whatever the finding of such an exercise, there will be no escape from two imperatives — to ring out the softness of the state and ring in a new priority for the region. That is the message conveyed by the complexities and persistence of these problems.

To take the second point first, there is need for policy-makers to remind themselves of the urgency of a closer focus on neighbourhood diplomacy. It is nobody's case that the present government or any of its predecessors defaulted on attending to the ties with Pakistan — or Nepal or other neighbours not excluding China — but the fact remains it has not been possible to attain the desired normality or even near-normality. The recent events in Nepal show how little it takes to expose the fragility of an equation that was taken for granted. Pakistan-centricity, at times practised by New Delhi, was confined to ad hoc strategies, to reactive moves, with the result that deep-rooted factors of hostility continued to grow. True, you need two to a tango — and even the best efforts by India could yield results only if there is reciprocity which, regrettably, was not forthcoming. But could we say all that was possible was done and there were no costly blunders at crucial stages?

Placed as India is, the ideal of smooth relations with all neighbours, in any given period, may remain elusive. But in dealing with the region, as a whole, the loss in one case could be made good by a gain in another. If, for instance, Pakistan's intransi-

gence comes in the way of normal bilateral relations, there could be a greater thrust on Nepal, Sri Lanka or Bangladesh. If the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation does not move forward and the progress towards the preferential trade regime slows down or the preliminaries for a free trade zone remain frozen because of Islamabad's attitude, the triangles or quadrangles could be pursued seriously (the sporadic moves initiated so far are not enough). The region, as a whole, needs to be given the topmost priority on a sustained basis as part of a coherent action plan.

This is not to suggest that this be done at the cost of other areas — dealings with big powers, the U.S., the European Union, Russia, Japan and West Asia, each important on its merits —, economic diplomacy and the like. But India's standing in the world and its credibility as a major player will be in direct proportion to the degree of its acceptability in the region, apart, of course, from its internal strength, political and economic. This has been evident in the conduct of external affairs. Take India's claim to a permanent seat in an expanded United Nations Security Council. While some in the world community recognise its soundness, others want New Delhi to win over the region in the first instance. The regional baggage carried by India now has been a major drag in its dealings at the global level.

It may be a coincidence but it is a matter of serious concern that the third consecutive new year finds India preoccupied with an uneasy relationship with Pakistan, to the near-exclusion of other matters. Add to this the crisis in the ties with Nepal.

India finds itself in an unenviable position in the region. Its sheer size, vastness of its resources and the consequent asymmetry between it and others in South Asia create the big-brother syndrome, working to its disadvantage. India has land or maritime borders with others in the re-

gion, none of which, however, has a common border. That was the reason for the slow progress of the SAARC, compared to the strides made by regional groupings elsewhere. New Delhi could not help these handicaps but could well formulate creative, innovative strategies to deal with this peculiar situation.

Even though no reminder was needed of the continued softness of the state, the developments on (or soon after) three new year days provided the disturbing evidence. The year 1998 started on a hopeful note. India and Pakistan had been engaged in composite dialogue, having worked out its modalities after tortuous negotiations. The situation took an unexpectedly pleasant turn, with the decision to start a regular bus service between New Delhi and Lahore, and the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, undertaking the inaugural journey. What happened then was recent history — the Lahore Declaration, a Memorandum of Understanding on nuclear confidence-building measures, euphoria over the historic discussions with his then Pakistani counterpart, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, the promise of a return visit and the back-channel diplomacy to resolve the Kashmir issue. The optimism, however, did not take long to evaporate. The gains of Lahore were undone by Kargil and the scars left by it continue to plague the bilateral relationship.

The bus diplomacy was a sound proposition — as was grudgingly recognised even by Mr. Vajpayee's detractors at that point of time. Those who found fault with it later spoke with hindsight, an inferior brand of wisdom. There was nothing wrong with the Lahore process, but everything was wrong with the way Pakistan embarked on the Kargil misadventure. Whether Mr. Sharif was fully in the know of it or whether the operation was the handiwork of the then army chief and present military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, was beside the point.

The lapses on the part of the intelligence set-up and the failure of the field formations to take precautions, necessary in a sensitive region, were avoidable, man-made factors. Whether the gaps, revealed then, have been plugged is not known. What is public knowledge is that Parliament did not find time to consider the report of the committee set up to enquire into what went wrong. The non-seriousness about its findings — as widely perceived — is as serious as was the original failure. Softness compounded by apathy.

The hijack episode, from December 25 to 31, 1999 was a story of disregard of routine security precautions, mismanagement and bungling. It was a series of blunders — the laxity at the Kathmandu airport, where the unlucky flight originated, the lapse at Amritsar, where the hijackers could have been overpowered and the trauma of the passengers cut short and, perhaps, the lost life saved, and the failure to stall the plane at Dubai, where it landed before flying to a safe haven, the Taliban-controlled Kandahar. The crisis management group, comprising top functionaries of the Government, evoked ridicule because of its waywardness. As a result of New Delhi's shrunken options, there was perhaps no escape from a trade-off — the release of three dreaded terrorists for the safety of 180-plus passengers. It was a bitter pill New Delhi had to swallow. But the country could have been spared the ignominy of the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, taking the released terrorists aboard his plane to Kandahar.

And, now, the new year finds the ceasefire hanging in the balance, between hope and despair — hope because of the start of a peace process and despair because of the continued acts of violence by elements, operating from the Pakistan territory. As for the Nepal episode, attention needs to be drawn to two of its many dimensions — it had had its origin in the Mumbai underworld bid to blackmail a popular star by fanning anti-India sentiments in Nepal, and the patronage extended by the ISI to this campaign. It is time the state put an end to its softness. We deserve better new year "gifts".

THE HINDU