

Future axis part one

IT MAY have been a coincidence, but Monday saw India's defence officials interacting with both the US and Russia on matters of military cooperation in New Delhi. Only a few years ago, such proximity with the two adversaries of the Cold War was quite out of the question. Now, however, neither of them may mind. For India, being a friend of both the US and Russia may be too much of a good thing. It is aware, of course, that Washington's interest is a direct result of the decline in Pakistan's position in American eyes. Because of the continuing threat posed by various *jehadi* groups in Pakistan, and the presence of an inherently unstable military dictatorship there, the US can no longer have the same kind of faith in Pakistan as during the Cold War.

The result is an automatic elevation of India's status in its eyes. But there is more to the growing Indo-American ties than the Pakistan angle. Perhaps China is more relevant in this context. However, if the American interest in India lies in building it up as a coun-

terweight to China, the Russians seem to have other ideas. The manner in which the US has returned to the Central Asian scene in the context of the war against terrorism cannot have pleased Moscow. The former superpower regards Central Asia as a part of its sphere of influence. Since China, too, may harbour similar reservations about the US presence, it is only natural for diplomats to revive the idea of a Russia-China-India axis.

At the moment, it may be just a hot air balloon, especially because far too many cross-currents are involved. For instance, China insists on maintaining an 'all weather' friendship with Pakistan, while India's border problems with it remain unresolved. However, America's emergence as the sole superpower, with its seeming preference for unilateral action against 'rogue' States, is an uncomfortable reality for Russia and China. Both might believe, therefore, that close ties with India of a kind which Russia already maintains may not be a bad idea. For India, it is a win-win situation — at least on the surface.

MEA not sure of ISI hand in attack

Udayan Nambodiri
New Delhi, January 23

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THE EXTERNAL Affairs Ministry's reading of yesterday's shooting outside Kolkata's American Center is not as black and white in terms of its link with Pakistan-backed terrorism as has been the Home Ministry's characterisation.

The guarded response of the MEA's official spokesperson yesterday to pointed questions on whether India held usual suspect Pakistan responsible, somewhat anticipated the US State Department's reluctance to conclude that it was a "terrorist" strike at an American facility.

The FBI's Director, Robert S Mueller III, also stopped short of using the 'T word' saying the incident was a "horrible tragedy and an assault on police officers categorising it beyond that would be inappropriate at this time".

South Block officials on Wednesday remained tightlipped when prodded on the question. "We are waiting for the report of the Special Secretary of the Home Ministry who is in Kolkata to file his report. A precise categorisation can be made only afterwards".

North Block, on the other hand, is more gung ho. Following the example of his senior minister, L K Advani yesterday, Minis-

ter of State for Home I G Swami, said today: "India has no doubt that ISI linked terrorist groups were involved. The US should accept this fact despite initial reluctance".

Appearing in an interview to a TV channel, Swami said he was "absolutely sure" that the ISI and Pakistan were involved in yesterday's attack and that he had "evidence" about it. This is far more than what the MEA ventures to say.

Diplomats, who tend to think that discretion is the better part of valour, point out that the Kolkata incident appear more in line with classical, Bombay mob style operations. But this is not to say that the MEA is downplaying the probable ISI —Farhan Mallick linkage. An official pointed out that past experience always pointed to a definite nexus.

The factor weighing heavily on New Delhi's external reticence is the wait-and-watch policy adopted since General Pervez Musharraf's January 12 speech. This was evident in the case of the two militant strikes already experience in Jammu and in the Valley over the past fortnight.

The External Affairs Ministry has pleaded for time to "analyse evidence" before jumping the gun and blaming Pakistan — a policy which has evidently not lasted.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 JAN 2002

MEA curb on Karmapa visit to monastery

Sanjay Singh in New Delhi

Jan. 23. — The ministry of external affairs has denied permission to the Karmapa Lama, Ugyen Trinley Dorje, to visit a Buddhist monastery at Bir in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, sources said. The Karmapa is, at present, staying at Sind Bari in the same district and wished to visit the monastery at Bir, 40 km from his present abode, in the second week of February.

The official move, coming in the wake of the Chinese Prime Minister, Mr Zhu Rongji's visit to New Delhi, has raised eyebrows among the Karmapa's followers.

The Dalai Lama has made a strong recommendation to the government that the Karmapa be allowed to visit the monastery at Bir, greatly revered by the Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism where a major festival and huge offering to Lord Buddha would be made by the followers. The Karmapa's

principal spiritual teacher, Tai Situ Rinpoche, reportedly heads that monastery and the young religious leader wants to take the opportunity to be with him for some time. The Karmapa's Kagyu sect, known as the "Black Hats," is one of four main strands of Tibetan Buddhism.

Sources said Mr LK Advani has taken up the matter with top MEA officials and asked them to consider the matter judiciously. The government had earlier allowed the Karmapa to visit Leh, an important seat of Buddhism last September where he was given a very warm welcome by the followers. He also visited Varanasi with official permission, sources said. The MEA didn't comment on the issue.

"It's an absurd decision to ban his movement in the same district. If he could visit far away places like Leh and Varanasi with official permission then the rationale of stopping him from visiting another monastery in the same state and meeting his

principal teacher is not understandable. We hope the government reconsiders its decision," his followers said.

The Karmapa had crossed over to India and reached Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh in January 2000.

He was reported to have been frustrated with the Chinese administration which had recognised him earlier, at not being allowed to meet his teachers at his 800-year-old Tsurphu monastery in central Tibet. The Chinese authorities reportedly denied several requests for a visa by his Dharamshala-based principal teacher, Tai Situ Rinpoche.

The Karmapa is said to be a very strong Tibetan nationalist, and wanted to work for the cultural and religious development of the people there, "but was concerned with repression on religious activities, and also worried about deliberate dilution of Tibetan culture by the authorities in Tibet."

West has no right to press India: George

S Rajagopalan

Washington, January 20

AFTER PLAYING the dove for 48 hours in Washington DC, Defence Minister George Fernandes was back to his old self as he hopped across to New York and attacked the West for asking India to pull back its forces.

Irrked by the oft-repeated call for withdrawal of troops, Fernandes virtually questioned the right of the Western nations to make such a demand. Although the US has of late stopped making the demand in public, the focus of US efforts continues to be on an early pullback of forces. In about every engagement here, Fernandes was assailed by the same question.

When a Fox News anchor asked him if India could move its troops back two miles so that Pakistan can be pressured to follow suit, Fernandes said: "What good it would do when you (Pakistan) enable the terrorists from your territory even today to move into our territory."

He was particularly dismissive of apprehensions that tensions surrounding the full mobilisation of forces could culminate in a nuclear showdown. He sought to draw a parallel with several confrontations between the US and the former Soviet Union during the Cold War era that did not assume a nuclear dimension.

In New York, he said the talk of a nuclear showdown was "an insult to the people and leaders of the region". Fernandes sought to remind Americans that Musharraf was still to prove his credentials on ending cross-border terrorism. When the Fox anchor said Musharraf had handed over seven al-Qaida terrorists to the US, Fernandes jumped at it saying the Pakistani President should be doing the same with the 20 sought by India.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 JAN 2002

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2002

TOWARDS ALL-PARTY DIPLOMACY

THE NATIONAL CONSENSUS on ways to deal with Pakistan in the context of the recent terrorist attack on Parliament House in New Delhi must serve as the motive force of India's planned all-party diplomacy. Yet, the consensus should first be fine-tuned to address the new situation which the international community seems to visualise following Pakistan's latest declaration of intent to rein in anti-India terrorism. Earlier, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has had to engage the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, in an effort to reassure all concerned that there will be no politicking by the ruling establishment in constituting inter-party delegations to travel abroad and espouse India's anti-terror cause. In a sense, the political storm in New Delhi over the composition of such delegations now appears to have blown over after both the Government and the opposition Congress(I) agreed to work together on this and related issues in the supreme national interest. It is essential, therefore, that the Vajpayee administration does not lurch back to any kind of unilateralism in preparing for a pan-party diplomatic offensive in the larger international arena. If the conscience of the global community is to be awakened, India ought to vigorously articulate its concerns about the external terrorist threats to its stability as the world's largest secular democracy. Any real or apparent signs of national dissonance over the basic thrust or over the political logistics of the planned Indian diplomatic campaign of this kind will only impede it even before it can reach the boost-phase. The diplomatic task of winning friends and influencing nations to promote India's anti-terror objectives is a serious matter that rightly belongs to the realm of the national interest itself.

The pan-party initiative of presenting New Delhi's case to the global community reflects a considered non-militarist way of addressing the terrorist challenges. An obvious sphere of New

Delhi's attention in this context is the bloc of Islamic countries on account of Pakistan's dynamic association with it. To push this core agenda forward, India's political leaders must act with unity of purpose to promote the crux of India's national consensus in a wholly transparent fashion. If diplomacy is given a fair chance, the international community might be able to persuade or pressure Pakistan to completely roll back its tactical-strategic agenda of encouraging cross-border terrorism in various parts of India including Jammu and Kashmir.

It is in this overall situation that India's inter-party delegations, which are still being constituted, will find it necessary to neutralise the international misgivings about some of the latest observations by the Indian Army Chief, S. Padmanabhan. Now, Gen. Padmanabhan has on the whole discounted the likelihood of an apocalyptic scenario of a Pakistan-India nuclear exchange. However, India's political leaders will need to reassure their foreign interlocutors about the credibility of New Delhi's commitment to a policy of not being the first to launch a nuclear strike against any country, Pakistan included. India's no-first-use doctrine of nuclear security is indeed rooted in the moral and pacifist fervour of its people. Nonetheless, Gen. Padmanabhan's statements and the general drift of the Union Home Minister, L. K. Advani's latest conversations with the top U.S. leadership seem to have had a definitive tactical purpose. They appear to have reckoned that India should speak from a position of perceivable strength so that Pakistan's President, Pervez Musharraf, might feel compelled to seriously address New Delhi's concerns. Yet, with Pakistan too constituting a Kashmir panel of its own to try and woo the international community, India's political delegations may discover that their planned diplomatic offensive abroad is even more of a challenge.

16 JAN 2002

Opp rejects mediation on Kashmir

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Jan. 13. — The Opposition today rejected Gen Musharraf's demand for a third-party mediation.

In a meeting with the Prime Minister some of them saw "some positive signs" in Gen Musharraf's address, some asked for the resumption of bilateral dialogue, but all of them agreed that the General's real intentions would be tested not by his talks but his actions on the ground.

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These views were aired when Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, trying for a consensus on the Indian stand, invited the Opposition leaders over to his residence to discuss the General's address. The nearly 90 minute-long discussions followed the Cabinet Committee on Security meeting.

Among those present were Mrs Sonia Gandhi, Dr Manmohan Singh, the CPI-M general secretary, Mr Harkishen Singh Surjeet, the CPI leader, Mr D Raja, the RJD leader, Dr Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, and

9-F Poining
the BSP leader, Ms Mayawati from the Opposition. From the NDA those present included BJP spokesman, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra and Trinamul Congress chief whip, Mr Sudip Bandopadhyay. Some leaders like the Samajwadi Party representatives couldn't make it to the short-notice meeting, apparently because they were not in Delhi.

The Prime Minister and Mr Jaswant Singh briefed the Opposition on the government's assessment of Gen Musharraf's address and sought their

opinions. J-S-P
After the meeting Dr Manmohan Singh told reporters that Mrs Sonia Gandhi told the Prime Minister that there were "some positive signs" in the Pakistani President's address, but that he has not changed his stand on Kashmir. She rejected the demand for a third-party mediation and said only the Shimla accord can provide the base. She also pointed out how the Pakistani leader failed to mention about either the Shimla Accord or the Lahore Declaration.

THE STATESMAN

14 JAN 2002

Parties prick Pervez balloon

HT Correspondent & PTI
New Delhi, January 13

THE COUNTRY'S major political parties today rejected Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf's suggestion of third party mediation to resolve the Kashmir dispute.

At a meeting convened by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at his residence, the leaders of various parties said both the countries would have to engage themselves in a peaceful dialogue and there was no role for any third party.

Crediting Musharraf to have come up with some "positive elements" they however cautioned the Government that resumption of Indo Pak dialogue should depend on "credible action on the ground".

Congress leader Manmohan Singh told reporters that party president Sonia Gandhi made it clear that there was no change in Pakistan's position with regard to Kashmir, and Congress was not in favour of any third party intervention as the Simla Agreement provided enough framework for resolving all outstanding bilateral disputes.

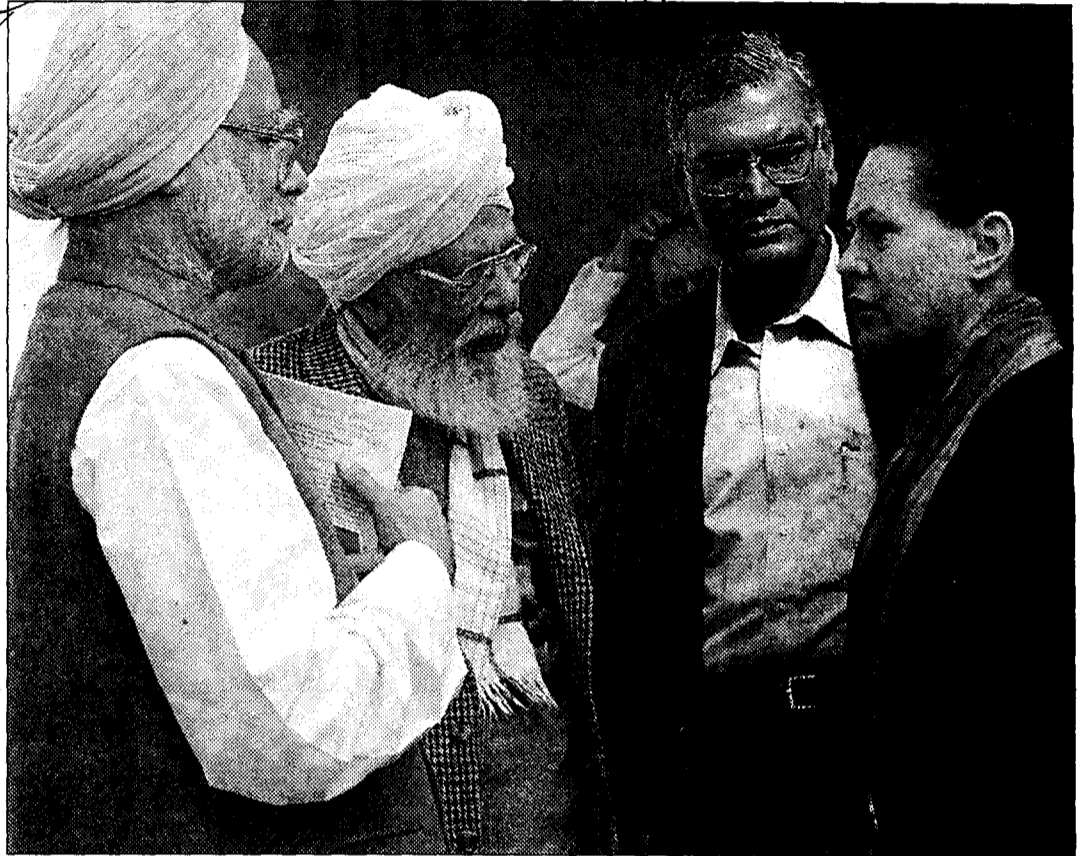
Congress President Sonia Gandhi said Musharraf's speech had some "positive elements" as he has promised firm action against terrorists and stopping of cross-border terrorism.

"But the real proof of the pudding is in the eating as much will depend on how his intentions are translated into action," Manmohan Singh told reporters. Asked about Musharraf's offer for talks, Singh said there should be credible actions on the ground.

The meeting was attended among others by CPM leader Harkishan Singh Surjeet, CPI leader D Raja, Trinamool Congress MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay, BSP vice-president Mayawati and RJD leader Raghuvansh Prasad Singh.

Describing Musharraf's speech as "positive", Surjeet said most of the things we have been demanding, he has accepted.

However, the party did not favour any third party intervention in resolving bilateral issues.



(From left) Manmohan Singh, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, D Raja and Sonia Gandhi after the all-party meeting at Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's house on Sunday.

Asked to comment on Musharraf's offer for resumption of talks, he said, he hoped the talks would continue and added the government had never said no to such talks.

CPI national secretary D Raja said his party had taken a "positive note" of Musharraf's speech. "As far as religious extremism and terrorism are concerned, Musharraf's statements are quite positive," he added.

Referring to the Kashmir issue, he said the party's position was that both the countries would have to engage themselves in a meaningful dialogue and there was no question of any third party mediation. On Musharraf's offer for talks, he said there was slight change in the situation as the atmosphere was becoming somewhat conducive.

BJP MP Vijay Kumar Malhotra, who also attended the meeting, said several parties objected to Musharraf's refusal to hand over 20 terrorists to India.

He said the country should remain cautious till Musharraf's statements were translated into deeds and added most of the parties have expressed similar feelings that talks should resume only after taking into account changes in ground realities.

Musharraf, tried to strike a balance in his televised address last night between fobbing off the Taliban militia on one hand and revolt by Sindhis and Punjabis on the other, a senior BJP leader said today.

"While the Pakistan President is now confronted with the prospect of tackling Taliban militia, he is also facing revolt by Sindhis and Punjabis living in

the North-West Frontier Province in his own country. So Musharraf has to play the balancing game," he said.

In Gangtok, the BJP national secretary in-charge of North-east, P B Acharya, said that Musharraf had stressed that Benazir Bhutto was waiting in the wings to wrest power.

The Pakistan President "accepted in a way" that terrorists like Dawood Ibrahim and Tiger Memon, wanted by India in Mumbai serial blasts and other disruptive activities, are now in his country, Acharya said.

Complimenting Atal Bihari Vajpayee's efforts to stop cross-border terrorism, the BJP leader said that by taking everyone into confidence before making a move, the Prime Minister has now become a statesman and carved a niche for himself in the India as well as in world.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 JAN 2002

14 JAN 2002

Congress snubs Centre on MP delegations

Q. F. Pillai
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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Jan. 12. — A day after the Prime Minister bought peace with Mrs Sonia Gandhi on the issue of sending an all-party delegations abroad, the Congress today snubbed the government by sending a list of relatively junior leaders to the PMO as party nominees.

Adding to the government woes the Left camp today said "it is unwilling to join the mission as it looks like a futile exercise".

The Congress also negated indications from the NDA side yesterday that Mr Shivraj Patil may replace the now "unavailable" Dr Manmohan Singh (the group leader in the earlier 'reported list'). It also left out Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker Mr P M Sayeed (another reported group leader) saying he "has fallen sick".

Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Mrs Najma Heptullah has been named as the leader of a group that visits Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Sudan. Lok Sabha member and former union minister Mr R L

Bhatia has been nominated for the team to Egypt and Syria with Mr Mani Shankar Iyer in the team to Brussels.

The list was cleared at a meeting presided over by Mrs Gandhi (unavailable for the tours because of 'campaign schedule'), Dr Manmohan Singh, Mr Natwar Singh and Mr Jaipal Reddy.

Mr Reddy said "even now nobody knows the status of the delegations or at what level they are going to interact abroad", adding "we certainly appreciate the gesture of the Prime Minister to talk to Mrs Gandhi yesterday. But 10 days were wasted after the all-party meeting. Mr Vajpayee was reportedly apologetic and said it was due to some of his colleagues and officials the whole thing was mismanaged".

CPI-M Rajya Sabha leader Mr S Ramachandran Pillai said, "Last night Mr Pramod Mahajan called me up requesting to send the names of two party nominees. But I told him we are not keen to join the mission, since there was no discussion on what should be

the Indian view. On his request to reconsider the decision, I said the politburo will discuss it, but we are unlikely to join".

Mr Pillai and CPI general secretary Mr A B Bardhan said Mr L K Advani's conduct in Washington amounted to seeking a direct role of the USA in the Kashmir issue, which was a violation of the Shimla Accord and the Lahore declaration. "Mr Advani is pleading with the USA to pull out our chest-nuts from the fire. This plea to Washington has serious implications", Mr Bardhan said.

RJD parliamentary party leader Mr Raghuvansh Prasad Singh said Mr Mahendra Prasad, a Rajya Sabha MP, whose name figured in the "reported list", had nothing to do with the party. He had been expelled from the party long back and is now an unattached member. Mr Singh said "I am amazed to hear his name was cleared by the government as RJD's representative to the mission."

THE STATESMAN

1971

Opp rejects MP delegations

Statesman News Service

Jan. 10. — A spokesman of the Prime Minister's Office tonight said, "The government has not yet finalised any list of delegations" to visit various countries to highlight India's view on the stand-off with Pakistan. This clarification came soon after the Opposition rejected what they called the "government unilaterally constituting" some delegations of parliamentarians for the mission.

They said the government had failed to keep its word that Opposition leaders would be consulted on the constitution of the teams and accused the government and the BJP of "politicking and non-seriousness in dealing with vital national issues."

Sources, however, clarified that "when the idea of sending all-party delegations was proposed at last month's all-party meeting by many leaders, including Miss Mamata Banerjee and Mr AB Bardhan, it was decided that the parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, would

discuss with the Opposition the constitution of the delegations and he accordingly may have done it".

The sources said Mr Manmohan Singh was consulted though his approval was pending. They assigned his strong reaction to the possibility of his desire to please Mrs Sonia Gandhi. There was no point in consulting the Congress about the Rajya Sabha deputy chairperson, Mrs Najma Heptullah, and the Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker, Mr PM Sayeed. They were selected to head the delegations because of their constitutional positions.

The CPI general secretary, Mr AB Bardhan, said the government has backed out of the promise. "This is merely a list prepared in the office of the parliamentary affairs minister and we don't accept it". Mr S Ramachandran Pillai (CPI-M) said: "Not only should the government have consulted the Opposition on the teams but also to finalise the 'Indian viewpoint'."

Another report on page 2

THE STATESMAN

11 JAN 2002

Special US envoy should head for Pakistan: BJP chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BANGALORE, JANUARY 7

95-381

THE BJP today resented the US move to send a special envoy to India to defuse tension with Pakistan and said Islamabad should give up its "childish approach" towards Delhi and take "assured action" against terrorists than holding out "empty" assurances.

Asserting that sending the envoy to India would not serve any purpose, BJP President Jana Krishnamurthy told reporters here that the special envoy should rather visit Pakistan and impress upon it to take firm action against terrorists and stop cross-border terrorism.

"Better he (President George Bush) sends an envoy there," Krishnamurthy said, referring to reports that the US was mulling over sending a special envoy to de-escalate the heightened tension in Indo-Pak relations.

On Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's dialogue offer to India, the BJP chief said, "we do not want empty assurances. We want assured action." If Pakistan was determined to join hands with India in the battle against terrorism, it should prove it through action, he said.

But, he said, Pakistan's actions so far had only been "peripheral" and did not go into the "roots of the problem".

"The Pakistan Foreign Minister says we should forget the past. Are we to forget terrorism. Are we to forget the hijack of an Indian plane? Are we to forget the attacks on Jammu and Kashmir Assembly and Parliament?" he said.

Krishnamurthy said that Pakistan should create a peaceful atmosphere and "let the people of India be convinced of Islamabad's peace offer or talks offer".

Commenting on the tension along the Indo-Pak border, Krishnamurthy said that India had never sought war, but never "shied away" whenever it was forced upon the country. "We are ready to face any situation," he said. The BJP, he said, welcomed British Prime minister Tony Blair's statement that rejection of terrorism should be the basis of a dialogue with Pakistan.

"After landing in India, Blair could understand the ground realities. Now Britain is very firm (against terrorism)," Krishnamurthy said, apparently referring to the British premier's controversial statement that Pakistan's position on the Kashmir issue was "very strong".

Asked why the Union Home Ministry still had not come out with the much-promised white paper on ISI activity in India, he said Home Minister L.K. Advani must have his "own good reasons" for it.

The Home Minister must have felt that the issuing of the white paper, instead of serving the purpose for which it was intended, might harm it, he said. It must have been withheld in the overall interests of the country, Krishnamurthy said.

INDIAN EXPRESS

8 JAN 2002

TUESDAY, JANUARY 1, 2002

GIVING DIPLOMACY A CHANCE

THE EMERGING SIGNS of a determined effort by the Government and the Opposition to join hands and give diplomacy a fair and prime chance raise hopes for a new sense of direction in New Delhi's battle against the external terrorists. To the extent that this might lead to a definitive pullback from the brink of a military confrontation with Pakistan, the Vajpayee administration and the Opposition leaders deserve support on the international stage too and not just at home. With Pakistan's President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, also taking conspicuous action against the anti-India terrorist groups as adroitly as possible within his turbulent jurisdiction, the two countries must now seize this new moment of hope and try to defuse bilateral tensions. The real issue, the politics of terror, can only then be addressed with the seriousness it deserves. By welcoming Gen. Musharraf's latest crackdown against the terrorist groups blamed for the aborted yet horrific attack on India's Parliament House, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, has indeed set the right tone at this time of crisis stakes on the bilateral front. For India, the best bet in these circumstances is a diplomatic campaign inspired by a genuine national consensus rather than a militarist posture. At present, what is surely not in doubt is the moral legitimacy of India's sense of outrage over the systematic chain of terrorist attacks that its democratic and secular polity has had to endure. Yet, New Delhi's embattled discourse hinting strongly of a military option and the countervailing rhetoric from Islamabad have not so far yielded dividends. The international community has not properly understood the nature of the basic terrorist challenge that the world's largest democracy has grappled with for over two decades now. So, the encouraging spirit of political fraternity, which was manifest at the latest all-party meeting in New Delhi, should serve as a propellant for a new diplomatic initiative that the Vajpayee administration seems inclined to consider at this stage.

What is particularly welcome is the apparent willingness of India's political parties to build a national consensus on how to address the terrorism challenge by engaging the larger global community in meaningful diplomacy. An idea under discussion is that New Delhi should send delegations to world capitals so as to win friends and influence nations as regards matters concerning the terrorist threats to India's pluralist society. Although there is nothing radically new about the idea that the Opposition leaders too should be associated with any such exercise, truly representative delegations will certainly add to its lustre. An important question that needs to be sorted out as part of any such initiative is how far will New Delhi be prepared to engage Islamabad itself by diplomatic means.

A salient ground reality is that Gen. Musharraf is braving the wrath of the religious radicals at home by trying to tone up Pakistan's own political environment and by meeting the substance of India's demands that he stop the terrorists in their tracks. It is of course arguable that the real motive force for his stupendous move is the pressure of international sentiment against terrorism. As a country under international observation since the U.S. began its diplomatic-military action against the Taliban-Osama axis of terror, Pakistan is in a state of almost tectonic flux. Understandably, Gen. Musharraf will not like his domestic constituencies to see him as buckling under pressure from India. Yet, his fiats arresting the leaders of Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba, both blamed for the attack on Parliament House in New Delhi, are clearly India-friendly gestures. New Delhi should take this aspect into account in formulating a new diplomatic campaign. It bears repetition that a stable and non-radicalised Pakistan is in India's enlightened interest. As Gen. Musharraf seeks to fashion such a society, New Delhi should take a good neighbourly view of him and his country.

THE HINDU

1 JAN 2002

Gujarat incidents an aberration: MEA

19/4 10.11 9. f. P. Singh
By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 14. In a damage control exercise, India has acknowledged the recent incidents of communal violence in Gujarat as an "aberration", but has insisted that these cannot be cited to question the country's basic secular and pluralistic credentials.

Responding to questions on the international fallout of the communal riots in Gujarat, the External Affairs Ministry had over this week said that India's antecedents as a secular and "pluralistic democracy" were recognised the world over. The spokesperson's observations acquire significance in the backdrop of concerns expressed by several countries, including key members of the U.N. Security Council as well as the European Union, over the Gujarat situation.

The United States, while lauding India as a "multi-ethnic and secular" nation, had, nevertheless, pointed to the futility of the Gujarat violence.

The MEA maintains that normality is fast returning to the State and has asked its missions to convey this message to the Governments abroad.

Embassies have been told to buttress their assertions by pointing to the higher secondary examinations being held in the State, in which 8,25,000 students are appearing. They have also been told to highlight the fact that the share prices of Government-owned companies, including pharmaceutical companies, have not fallen.

While the Government has chosen not to react sharply to the remarks made by most foreign Governments, it has taken strong exception to a recent statement by the Pakistan for-

ign office, which attacked the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, over the Gujarat developments.

Apart from the "unwarranted personal comments" about the Prime Minister, the foreign office spokesperson, in a statement, said that India found it "astonishing that the mouthpiece of the military regime, which has overthrown democracy and is pursuing plans for a fictional democracy with all powers and control vested in the army through a constitutionally suspect referendum, should be accusing others of being reactionary."

Pakistan "should seek to address the religious bigotry practised in its society, where followers of other religions or even sects of Islam are not allowed the freedom of their religious beliefs", the statement added.

The world outside India does not care about events in Gujarat

Different images

DIPLOMACY

K.P. NAYAR

For once the prime minister was wrong. Atal Bihari Vajpayee told inmates of the Shah Alam Roza refugee camp during his visit to Ahmedabad on April 4 that with all that was happening in Gujarat, he was troubled about how he would show his face in Singapore, where he was headed during that weekend.

If the sensitive, emotional Vajpayee was moved into making that statement after seeing the plight of 8,000 displaced Muslims in the camp, it was perfectly understandable.

If, on the other hand, the prime minister's reaction was the result of briefings he received from South Block about what to expect during his visit to southeast Asia, the officials who put Vajpayee on the defensive did both him and India a disservice.

From the distance of Washington, this columnist has been intrigued by recent reports, analyses and editorials in the Indian media about how the ground has suddenly been cut from under India's feet by the violence — no doubt reprehensible — which engulfed Gujarat. It is clear that the same rationale has been fed to Vajpayee at least by a section of officials in South Block.

It is important to remember in the face of this propaganda that foreign investment has no moral standard. If it did, Africa would not be in its present state of having been looted and plundered for decades by murderous dictators with the active collaboration of conglomerates from rich countries. Nor would South Africa have thrived under the apartheid practised by its former white rulers. It is seldom that heads of state and government the world over are moved beyond lip service by what is right and wrong. The only factor which would prod them into action is self-interest. If the former Yugoslav strongman, Slobodan Milosevic, is now in the Netherlands facing a war crimes tribunal, it is only because western Europe and the United States of America belatedly acted against him when they were haunted by ghosts of World War I. It was, after all, the murder of the Archduke of Austria by a Serbian which triggered the first great war.

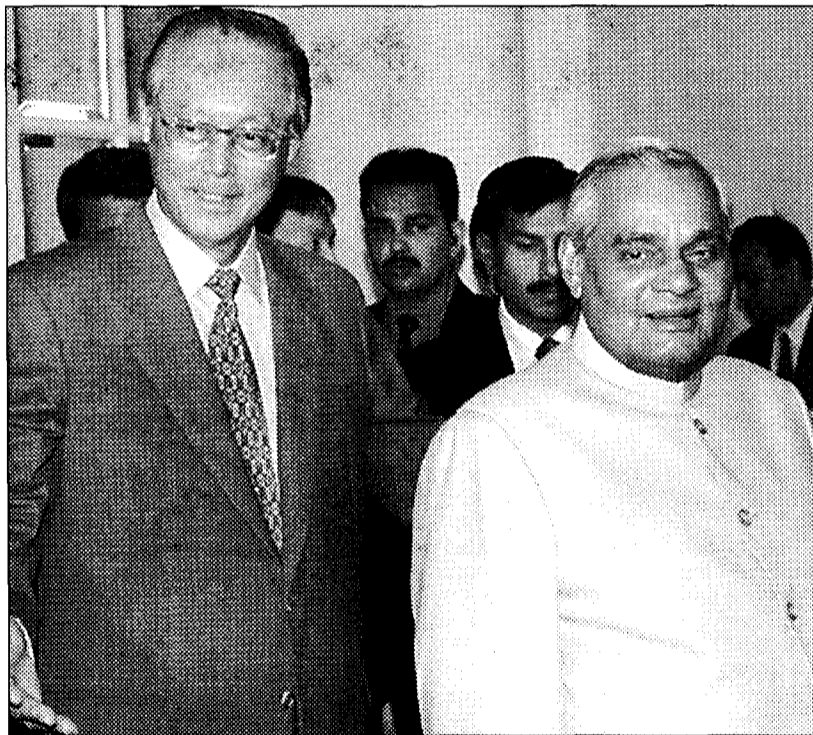
The reality is that the world outside India couldn't care less about what is happening in Gujarat. Even if more attention-grabbing events have not been taking place in west Asia, Pakistan and Venezuela, it is doubtful if any significant body of people abroad would have bothered to pause and think about Gujarat. The only exceptions are the Gulf states like Saudi Arabia where Pakistani diplomats have been working overtime to fan the flames of hatred against Hindus and Indians by tying Gujarat to the coat-tails of the current anti-Israeli, anti-US sentiment. But even there, in the efforts to get their compatriots to flood newspaper offices with anti-Indian mail, Pakistani diplomats are being worsted by the huge influx of genuine letters from newspaper readers on the Palestine issue.

In the US, where television is the most influential medium, images of Gujarat were few and far between even when violence in the state was at its height. There were the inevitable stories when passengers of the Sabarmati Express were burnt to death in Godhra and trouble subsequently erupted in parts of Gujarat. But it was not a story which was beamed into living rooms in America again and again.

In the print media, some American

cally irrelevant to the current state of play in Indo-US relations.

The overall feedback across the US from circles which matter to New Delhi is a pervasive sense of relief that the violence in Gujarat has been contained and restricted despite grave provocations on both sides of the communal divide. If the violence had spread to other states and engulfed, say, a city of high international visibility like Mumbai, Vajpayee would, indeed,



Vajpayee need not have had any worry about how he would show his face in Singapore

reporters of south Asian descent who were sent to India to report on Gujarat decided that the best way to justify the trust reposed in them, who were relatively junior and inexperienced journalists, by their editors was to resort to India-bashing. After all, the only thing that justified their choice for covering the story was their Indian ethnicity.

Unlike in the aftermath of the post-Ayodhya riots in 1993, none of the big names of American print journalism, who command respect in every corner of the world, went to India to report on Gujarat or to analyse the impact of events in the state. Officials of the administration, when asked on record about the deaths in the western Indian state, expressed condolences and piously hoped that the situation would get better. Except on policy issues, on-the-record briefings, after all, are occasions to produce the least controversial responses and provide sound-bites or a quote for reporters who pose a particular question. No more.

During background and off-the-record briefings, Bush administration officials from various arms of the US government have made it abundantly clear that Gujarat is not a foreign policy issue. In other words, it is intrinsi-

cally irrelevant to the current state of play in Indo-US relations.

A clearer picture will be available later this week when the finance minister, Yashwant Sinha, arrives in Washington for meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and has his usual interaction with American business interests. At his recent public appearances, the Indian ambassador to the US, Lalit Mansingh, has been making a point which has largely shaped American attitude to Gujarat. "I dare say if this had happened in any other country, there would have been a holocaust," he told the University Club in the US capital last week. "I think that is the spirit of India...There are sparks now and then, considering our size, our history, our track record. We love to keep faith in

India because for us, this is part of our national culture," Mansingh said.

Many Americans have vivid memories of the riots in Los Angeles just 10 years ago when Rodney King, a black man was beaten to pulp by the city police and the very policemen were then acquitted in court despite a video footage of the beating. And America is now living down the hate crimes which came in the wake of terrorist attacks in New York and Washington last September. As an aside, the Rodney King case has similarities to Gujarat — even in the behaviour of the police establishment. Tapes of radio conversations between one of the officers who beat up King and the police headquarters, made public during the trial of the policemen, are very revealing.

"I haven't beaten anyone this bad in a long time," one of the officers gloated as he spoke to the police headquarters from his car radio. The headquarters responded: "Oh well...I'm sure the lizard didn't deserve it...ha, ha, I'll let them know, OK." The lizard in question, of course, is King, the victim of police brutality.

For the moment, however, let us leave the US and go to Singapore, which was a source of worry for Vajpayee when he came face to face with displaced Muslims in Ahmedabad.

During numerous visits by this columnist to Singapore, those in charge of the city state's security, right upto key ministers, have shared their deep concerns about an Islamic threat to the stability of the prosperous island.

Those concerns have only increased since the events of September 11. Evidence of this has been the recent crackdown on an Islamic ring in Singapore and stepped up cooperation with the US on fighting religious extremism.

Like many people in India, Singaporeans, are aware that they are encircled by Islam and that within that encirclement is a potential threat to the city state's way of life. Indeed, Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country in the world, is already adrift and fundamentalist forces in Malaysia are only reined in because of the firm leadership of Mahathir Mohammed. Under those circumstances, Vajpayee need not have had any worry about how he would show his face in Singapore. It is even safe to assume that the prime minister's speech in Goa about militant Islam has been influenced by the exchanges he has had with Singapore's extremely articulate and forceful leaders like Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong.

The violence, the killings and the destruction in Gujarat committed by both Hindus and Muslims deserve to be condemned. But to argue that these incidents have brought India to a *cul-de-sac* is to fall victim to propaganda which is replete with the kind of double standards which Vajpayee referred to while clarifying his speech in Goa.

Fillip for 'Look East'

South East Asian Nations and a select few regional and non-regional countries. That, more or less, is where our venture into South East Asia has remained. Efforts by successive Indian administrations to find space in the economic grouping of the Pacific Rim countries Apec or the Asia-Europe Summit Asem have failed to bear fruit.

The only important new move will be the forthcoming top-level meeting called Asean-plus-one, which provides for concentrated dialogue between the regional organisation and one selected partner at a time. This slow evolution of institutional links properly reflects the very gradual progress in substantive relations. Singapore long ago identified India as a partner for the future, and India welcomed the prospect of sizeable investment from that quarter.

Some promising projects were identified, like the possible entry of Singapore Airlines, in collaboration with a local party, into the domestic civil aviation

terms with Phnom Penh. We helped restore and preserve the great temple complex of Angkor Vat, for which we received bitter criticism from European agencies that felt this was their reserved domain. It is good to know that another important conservation project in the same neighbourhood is now to be undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India. Hun Sen is known to India from that time; he has moved a long way from the early days when he was installed as Prime Minister by the Khmer Rouge. Now he governs in his own right and has guided his country along a very different path. Another sort of continuity was provided by the presence of King Sihanouk, one of the earliest stalwarts of the anti-colonial struggle, colleague of Jawaharlal Nehru, a founding father of the non-aligned movement (NAM).

His, too, has been a long journey and it was touching to see him once again welcoming an Indian Prime Minister to his land. For Mr Vajpayee, it was a visit well worth making but there is no need to overload it with significance. Even at home it provoked little excitement, being at times more of a photo opportunity than anything else. The visit has given rise to some comments about a new strategic vision that drives us eastward. What is seen as an emerging security partnership between us and the USA is believed by some observers to have opened up a whole new area of opportunity in the region. Such thoughts are vague and nebulous and should be put away.

No such role is asked of us in the region. Asean is practical and down-to-earth in its ways, not given to the airy projections that sometimes overtake our policy makers. We need to adjust our own ways to secure better openings for ourselves in the region. If Mr Vajpayee's visit did something along those lines, it will have achieved as much as should be asked of it.

(The author is a former Foreign Secretary.)

sector. That did not survive a resourceful rearguard struggle by vested interests in India. Others have done better, including some infrastructure projects and joint projects for scientific collaboration, especially in information technology.

Mr Goh has been patient despite the many roadblocks that had to be negotiated. Even today, reforms since the first eastward venture a decade ago, India's economy is much less open than those of South East Asia. This is the essential constraint in the rapid growth of relations. One can expect a much larger and freer flow of economic exchanges with the region as the reform process in India gathers momentum. The visit to Cambodia had an altogether different character.

Through the 1980s, when Kampuchea (as it was known as then) was ostracised by most of the world, India was one of the few that continued on friendly

wide angle

SALMAN HAIDAR



Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee holds talks with his Singaporean counterpart Goh Chok Tong at the Istana Presidential Palace in Singapore on 8 April during his three-day visit as a landmark move to bolster Indian ties with the island state. — AFP

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has just been on a visit to Singapore and Cambodia. He follows hard on the heels of his minister for external affairs, who was in several other countries of the region just a few days ago. Once more, there is an eastward look to Indian policy. Another step has been taken in the decade-long, fitful quest to become seriously engaged in South East Asia.

This time round, the timing was not at all helpful. The events of Gujarat have seriously diminished us. They were responsible for keeping Mr Vajpayee away from the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting over a month ago. The situation has still not been brought under control. The world will wonder, as the country does, what this means and what it portends. The Prime Minister has not concealed his distress. He would know very well how great is the loss of standing that we have suffered. India just does not look like a partner of choice while its internal disorder is so great. Nor does the tension on the border with Pakistan that threatens at any moment to spill over into conflict do anything to enhance India's prestige. Certainly, this is no time for any significant initiatives in foreign affairs.

Even so, there are useful relationships to nurture in South East Asia and a top-level visit should not be a wasted effort. This is an important neighbourhood for India and it needs continuous attention. Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore is an old friend and a consistent advocate of stronger ties between Asean and India.

He took the initiative in obtaining dialogue-partner status for India against considerable opposition from some members of Asean, who called for simultaneous acceptance of Pakistan in the same capacity. Enhanced status as a dialogue partner enabled us to be part of the Asian Regional Forum where security matters relating to Asia are discussed between members of the Association of

Pitching for a larger role in S-E Asia

By Amit Baruah

BANGKOK, APRIL 12. The joint patrolling of the Malacca Straits by American and Indian naval vessels is clear indication that India has decided to raise its profile in South-East Asia.

Given the fact that during the Cold War, India was one of the targets of ASEAN attack over its policy of supporting the Vietnamese, and the only country to recognise the Heng Samrin regime in Cambodia outside the Soviet bloc during the 1980s, the current Indo-American convergence of interests is a new strategic factor in the politics of the region.

The Government of India, before taking this decision on joint patrolling, had sought the views of Indonesia and Malaysia, two key players in regional affairs. Others were apparently not sounded out in advance; presumably the Americans may have conducted a similar exercise.

Those familiar with the decision in Indian official circles told this correspondent that they are aware that such joint patrolling is bound to be taken note of by other players, especially China.

In South-East Asia, the Americans are involved in a military

"exercise" on Basilan island along with Filipino troops to flush out Abu Sayyaf guerrillas — their most direct engagement after September 11 — in any part of the world.

As of now, the Indian decision to patrol the Malacca Straits, along with the Americans, will be seen as unwelcome by the Chinese. Whether stated publicly or not, the Chinese see themselves as major players in this part of the world

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and are unlikely to appreciate a higher Indian profile.

From the Indian point of view, the joint patrolling and greater engagement with South-East Asia is being seen as an opportunity to break out of the confines of South Asia. Indian foreign policy-makers obviously find themselves frustrated by the hurdles in South Asia. In fact, as India moves for greater cooperation with South-East Asia, the "South Asian entity" is missing — just India is in the picture.

It can be legitimately argued that South Asia, despite SAARC, has little to show by way of a cooperative framework and has yet to resolve some of the more contentious issues dividing its

member-states.

However, in this day and age, when regional blocs are the order of the day and carry considerable clout, the inability of South Asia to assert itself as a regional entity is unlikely to be helpful to India in the long run. After the shrill rhetoric emanating from New Delhi about China prior to the May 1998 nuclear tests, the relationship between the two countries now appears to be more settled. India is also for raising the level of dialogue between the two countries — a visit by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, is expected by the end of the year.

It was pointed out that right through the Kargil conflict and the latest movement of Indian troops from east to west, the Chinese have not done anything which could have been seen as provocative.

Clearly, India doesn't see any immediate problems in its relationship with Beijing, but is watching out for the future course of Chinese foreign policy in the context of accelerating economic growth.

Delivering a lecture in Singapore on April 9, Mr. Vajpayee said the Asia-Pacific region was one of the "focal points of India's foreign policy, strategic

concerns and economic interests". The Prime Minister also made it plain that India was not seeking favours from any quarter as it pushed ahead with raising its level of interaction with South-East Asia.

It was, as Mr. Vajpayee put it, important for others in the region to recognise "manifest political and economic realities". As home to one billion people, India has to "be integral to any regional process pertaining to the Asia-Pacific".

"India's belonging to the Asia-Pacific community is a geographical fact and a political reality. It does not require formal membership of any regional organisation for its recognition or sustenance," the Prime Minister said during his Singapore lecture.

As India pitches for a larger role in this part of the world, it must also repeatedly show that engagement is not a luxury to be indulged in when domestic politics allows for foreign travel. And, if you want to show that there is merit in spreading India's wings beyond South Asia, you must also be able to prove to the rest of the world that India is a stable entity, where extremist forces of the kind that have run riot in Gujarat, are firmly in check.

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2002

THE 'LOOK-EAST' GAZE

11/9 ✓
THE NEW FOCUS of the Vajpayee administration on the finer aspects of India's ties with several East Asian states for over 10 days at this time seems to mark a desire to prove a new foreign policy point or two. As soon as the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, returned home after visiting China as also South Korea and Thailand besides Myanmar, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has set out on a tour of Singapore and Cambodia. The sequencing of their separate tours cannot be explained by any perceivable advantages of the travel logistics. In fact, Mr. Singh's zig-zag swing through parts of East Asia appeared to have been planned in the specific context of the inaugural flight between New Delhi and Beijing. Insofar as the overall logic of these diplomatic exercises by Mr. Singh and Mr. Vajpayee can be discerned, their ambitious intentions seem to be one of stamping India's geostrategic footprint across the different political zones of East Asia. If Japan has been left out of the ambit of their diplomatic outings at this juncture, the fact is that the Prime Minister had visited Tokyo not long ago. Of much greater relevance to the changing dynamic of India's foreign policy at this stage is the apparent reality that both Beijing and New Delhi are eager to strike a comfort level in their relationship so as to be able to pursue their independent objectives of reshaping the present global order. If this was the most striking aspect of Mr. Singh's latest diplomatic foray, Mr. Vajpayee has, during his visit to Singapore, sought to portray India as a country with a manifest destiny in the entire Asia-Pacific region and not just Asia. It is this aspect, indicative of an essentially formative vision or indeed of a nebulous idea, that shows up New Delhi's 'Look-East' policy as an intense gaze.

India had formulated the so-named 'Look-East' policy as a definitive innovation about a decade ago, and the logic then was that New Del-

hi should engage the increasingly vibrant economy-polities of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The thinking within New Delhi's foreign policy establishment at that time was to try and link India's liberalising economy with the markets of South East Asia. The mystique of India's historical connections with that segment of Asia having become a mere memory long ago, it was felt in the early 1990s that the ASEAN's perception of New Delhi as a non-belligerent state might be conducive to its economic engagement of the South East Asian states. It was in that general context that India became a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), an elite grouping that includes major powers such as the U.S. as also Russia and China with high security stakes in East Asia. With New Delhi having subsequently engaged the other ARF members on the Pokhran nuclear weaponisation tests of 1998, India seemed to ward off an imminent collapse of its 'Look-East' policy.

Now, the specifics of the latest agreements between India and some ASEAN states may, if implemented suitably, enable New Delhi to stay its 'Look-East' course. The move towards a possibly comprehensive Indo-Singaporean economic agreement acquires importance in the light of the city-state's ability to catalyse New Delhi's economic reforms. India's strategic interaction with South Korea is still very much a dialogue, except for the economic dimension. Separately, the concerted move by New Delhi and Bangkok to carve out a transport corridor across Myanmar deserves to be viewed in its own context as a cooperative venture. Instead, any move to see this proposed project as a possible sign of Sino-Indian rivalry for the strategic affections of key ASEAN states will only raise the stakes. In a sense, however, the success of India's 'Look-East' policy will depend on China's world view too.

9-8 Points
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THE HINDU

Looking east: phase two

By C. Raja Mohan

The second phase of the Look East policy is likely to be underscored by the emerging security partnership between New Delhi and Washington.

11/4
HD-10

THE PRIME Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to Singapore and Cambodia and the earlier swing through Asia by the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, mark the launch of the second phase in India's Look East policy. With a productive engagement of all the great powers and an intensified interaction with the sub-regions of the great continent in place, India is poised to make itself a significant player in the emerging Asian balance of power.

The first phase of the Look East policy launched by the Narasimha Rao Government in the early 1990s focussed on renewing contact with a region that India had drifted away from, thanks to the logic of the Cold War and its own insular economic policies. India's *de facto* alliance with the Soviet Union had left its ties with the other major Asian powers — China, Japan — and the United States terribly stunted. New Delhi's tailing of Moscow on regional security issues also left it in a politically antagonistic mode with key regional groupings such as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). India's inward-looking orientation disconnected it from the neighbourhood to the East, kept it apart from the economic dynamism of East Asia. By the turn of the 1990s, India had marginalised itself comprehensively in Asia.

As India launched itself on the course of globalisation in 1991, East and South East Asia began to loom large in its national economic strategy. The first years of the Look East policy saw a steady expansion of trade and investment links with the region. The pace of integration with the East slowed somewhat after the economic crisis that affected the region in the late 1990s. But as East Asia comes out of the crisis, the centrality of the economic imperative remains undiminished. Without a quicker pace of economic reforms and better integration of its foreign and trade policies, India will not be able to effectively sustain its Look East strategy. Note for

example, the stepped up efforts in the ASEAN to negotiate free trade arrangements with China, Japan and the U.S. and India's extreme reluctance to pursue a similar offer from Singapore. More than two years after agreeing to work out a free trade treaty with Singapore, it is announced during Mr. Vajpayee's trip to the city-state that a "study" will now be conducted!

The second phase in India's Look East policy has a new dimension — the development of India's remote Northeast. India's search for a new economic relationship with South East Asia is no longer driven by considerations of globalisation, but by the domestic imperative of developing the Northeast by increasing its connectivity to the outside world. Instead of consciously trying to isolate the Northeast from external influences, as it had done in the past, New Delhi is now recognising the importance of opening it up for commercial linkages with South East Asia.

Mr. Singh's recent visit to Thailand and Myanmar brought into focus this new element in the strategy. By taking advantage of Myanmar as a land bridge to South East Asia, India hopes to transform the Northeast from a security burden into a land of economic opportunity. While the success of this strategy will depend a lot on the ability of the Central Government and the Northeastern States to put adequate infrastructure in place and clean up the political act, the external conditions for a viable strategy towards the development of the Northeast are being realised.

The first phase of the Look East policy saw India establish institutional linkages with the regional organisations: Although New Delhi could not become a member of the larger Asia

Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum and the ASEM — the Asia Europe consultative mechanism — it joined the ASEAN as a full dialogue partner and a member of its political and security wing, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The ASEAN plus one summit later this year will cap India's successful political engagement of South East Asia during the 1990s.

Clouding India's political prospects in Asia during the 1990s were its uncertain relationships with the two great powers — the U.S. and China — and the key regional actors such as Japan and Australia. Although the end of the

Cold War opened the door for a new engagement with all these players, the nuclear issue tended to complicate ties. But India's post-Pokhran political isolation did not last too long. Its successful resolution of the nuclear tensions with the U.S. paved the way for a return to the region with an enhanced political standing. Nothing has elevated India's strategic profile in the region more than the new relationship it has built with the U.S., which will remain the dominant power in Asia for a long time to come. In the Cold War, India ended more often than not opposing the U.S. on regional security issues. After the Cold War, the first phase of India's Look East policy was accompanied by an expanding but tentative political engagement with the U.S.

The second phase of the Look East policy is likely to be underscored by the emerging security partnership between New Delhi and Washington. The advent of the Bush administration, its decision to lift the nuclear sanctions against India and the unfolding regional scenario after September 11 have helped cement the notion of a "natural alliance" between New Delhi and Washington. And at

the heart of the new security convergence between the two is the prospective cooperation in maintaining a stable balance of power in the Indian Ocean/Pacific regions.

India's new dalliance with the U.S. has, not surprisingly, eased the path for building more intensive security links with the American allies in the ASEAN — Australia, South Korea and Japan.

Somewhat counter-intuitively, India's improved ties with the U.S. have also created the space for a more self-confident and mature engagement with China. Mr. Singh's four-day visit to China earlier this month reflected the Indian determination to take advantage of the changed Asian context to move the relationship towards problem-solving and mutually beneficial cooperation.

In the first phase of the Look East policy, the prospect for Sino-Indian political cooperation was premised on resisting "hegemonism" — a Chinese code word for American dominance. But it saw very little movement in resolving intractable bilateral disputes over boundary, Sikkim, and Pakistan. The second phase of the Look East policy, premised unambiguously on New Delhi drawing closer to Washington, has ironically created the basis for addressing issues that have divided India and China for long. It is in the context of a rapidly expanding Indo-U.S. cooperation, greater uncertainty in Sino-U.S. ties, and the profound impact of the American war against terrorism in the region that New Delhi and Beijing have agreed to refashion their wary relationship. They have unveiled the framework for a broad-based dialogue on all issues of mutual concern and accelerate the clarification of the Line of Actual Control, resolve the dispute over Sikkim and liberate their relationship from Pakistan. Add to it the decision to aggressively pursue the huge prospects for bilateral economic cooperation and a new recipe has been created for transforming Sino-Indian relations.

THE HINDU

The Gujarat Government and the Centre have effectively destroyed India's image abroad

Zero credibility

By J.N. DIXIT

THREE RECENT encounters, two of them with foreigners and one with a fellow Indian, provoke me into writing this article about what is essentially a domestic aberration and tragedy for all Indians, namely, the communal violence which continues in Gujarat and some parts of Maharashtra. The encounters with the foreigners were with the ambassadors of foreign countries.

One of them remarked: "I am heartbroken about what is happening in India and the manner in which it is eroding India's credibility and respected image in the international community." The emotional content of this heart being broken about India is perhaps the result of his having served in India before in other capacities in his embassy.

The second envoy's reaction was rooted in concerned realism. He said: "It should be realised that the level of violence against Christians and Muslim minorities is now a part of a sequential record in perception in foreign governments and among outsiders. Don't you think the governments in India — both at the Centre and in states — should be aware of the negative, and more importantly, economic consequences of this continuing violence of which events in Gujarat are a major culminating point, like the destruction of the Babri mosque a decade ago?"

I must underline that neither of these ambassadors was Muslim or represented any Muslim country.

The third encounter was with a Hindu friend in Gujarat. "I do not like obfuscation about members of one community or the other, which has become part of our government jargon. Such jargons are an exercise in obfuscatory hypocrisy," he said. This Gujarati friend was objecting to the article which I wrote a fortnight ago criticising the Narendra Modi government for the manner in which the Gujarat violence was being handled. He said, "Do you realise that Gujarati Hindus are the most mild, peaceful and religiously devoted people? Have you given a thought to why such people were provoked into committing such drastic violence? Do you know that some areas of Gujarat like Godhra have become a second Pakistan? Are you aware that beyond a threshold, Muslims aggressiveness cannot be tolerated? The Hindu reaction was inevitable."

He proceeded to give me further appalling information. He said that



HOW WILL HE SHOW HIS FACE? Vajpayee with Singapore PM Goh Chok Tong

there was general anticipation about Muslim violence in Godhra against the VHP. When the violent Hindu reaction set in, there is no denying the fact that the state police was not functioning under the command of senior officials. Two ministers of the Gujarat government, Home Minister Gordhan Zadaphia and Arun Bhatt, were personally present at the Central Police Control Room and were directing the police deployments. They were 'representing' general sentiments of the Hindu public to teach Muslims a lesson.

The selective, discriminatory manner in which the government has dealt with the communal crisis in Gujarat has been confirmed by the National Human Rights Commission headed by former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court J.S. Verma. It is pertinent to recall the disturbing characteristics of the Gujarat government's crisis management techniques.

While the 62 perpetrators of the ghastly arson committed against the passengers at Godhra were arrested, none of the ringleaders of the mobs which attacked Muslim areas has been arrested. About nine senior IAS officers who took firm action against the Hindu mobs were transferred to nondescript assignments. The Director General of Police, A.K. Chakraborty, was constrained to write to the chief secretary protesting against this decision against officers who had performed their duties according to the Constitution.

While the victims killed in Godhra were initially granted Rs 2 lakh ex-gratia payment, the families of Muslims killed during the ri-

ots were given an ex-gratia payment of Rs 1 lakh, a macabre comparative evaluation of the worth of life of member of one community against the other. The delay in the army's deployment was because of the state government's delaying tactics. BJP president K. Jana Krishnamurthi even gave a clean chit to Modi five days before the prime minister's visit to Gujarat.

Despite the deployment of the police and army and the imposition of curfew, violence has continued in most urban centres in Gujarat, which has spread to cities like Akola in Maharashtra. Communal tensions have reached a level where Hindu and Muslim colonies have organised their vigilante groups against potential attacks. The government seems to have abdicated its role in maintaining law and order and communal harmony.

The domestic implications of all this need to be re-stated:

- The continuation of this violence means it can spread to other parts of the country affecting internal political stability. Such a situation provides fertile ground for Pakistan to augment subversive activities against India.

- The situation dangerously erodes public confidence in the governments — in Delhi and Gandhinagar.

- The violence has resulted in disruption of the economy of Gujarat and Maharashtra, two of the most economically enterprising states.

- It strengthens trends of communalisation of national politics which will strike at the very roots of diversity, plurality and tolerance.

- The ramifications of these incidents in terms of India's external

relations and foreign policy are equally damaging. India's credibility as a pluralist democracy is being seriously questioned in the chancelleries of the world and international media. Our advocacies against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism will be progressively subjected to doubts.

This weakens our stance on terrorism in J&K. Western diplomats are linking the violence in Gujarat, the Ayodhya agitation and the violence against Christians in different parts of the country since the last few years, and drawing the reluctant conclusion that the BJP-led government has a systematic communal agenda.

Of equal concern is the impact that developments in Gujarat would have on the Indian economy. Modernisation and reforms have been in a drift. This situation will become worse with the international business community losing confidence in the stability of the Indian political situation which will affect foreign trade, investments and transfer of technology from abroad which are so important to keep our economy on track.

One of my diplomatic interlocutors remarked: "I do not quite understand why a civilised and intelligent people like yours waste so much energy about building temples or destroying mosques or vice versa or on the question of conversion from one religion to other, when the rest of the world seems to be more focused on improving the economic infrastructure, educational and health facilities of their respective communities." One did not have a plausible response to this question.

Nehru said 50 years ago in the Lok Sabha that Partition is a lesson which Indians should always remember, that communal and caste antagonisms within Indian society pose a far more dangerous threat to India's independence and security than any external threat. Is it not time to accept the validity of this admonition instead of making the task of democratic governance hostage to short-term political gains?

I say this because of one remark by my Gujarati friend mentioned above. He said: "Have no doubt. If elections are organised in Gujarat now, the Modi government reap a landslide victory".

Is such a victory worth it, given the long-term interests of our country?

Riot shadow on PM's Singapore mission

Vajpayee to hardsell India as an investment destination

Udayan Nambodiri
Singapore, April 7

HERALDING A fresh chapter in bilateral ties, Prime Minister AB Vajpayee arrived here on Sunday on a three-day visit to Singapore during which the two nations plan extensive discussion on cooperation in trade, telecom and other areas.

Vajpayee was accorded a red carpet as his special Indian Airlines Boeing 747 aircraft touched down at Changi International Airport on the first leg of his two-nation tour which will also take him to Cambodia.

The Prime Minister's visit to Singapore and Cambodia is being described as significant in the context of New Delhi's endeavour to foster strong ties with the economically powerful 10-nation ASEAN with which India will hold a summit-level meeting in Phnom Penh in November.

Vajpayee will meet President S.R. Nathan, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and senior minister Lee Kuan Yew on Monday. During Vajpayee's three-day stay in Singapore, the two countries will sign an accord to facilitate opportunities of setting up projects and joint research in the telecom sector.

Vajpayee will try to hardsell India as an investment destination. The memory of how India withstood the Asian economic shock of 1997 will be highlighted in his speech to Singapore's business community.

But he is bracing for some hard questions on Gujarat and the security of foreign capital in a country that is fast polarising along communal lines. There are also fears that the eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation between South Asia's nuclear neighbours may escalate into a war.

Not counting the Kathmandu trip, this is Vajpayee's first foreign jaunt since December 13. The wide publicity given to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's interview to the German magazine, *Der Spiegel*, threatening India with a nuclear attack, has not helped matters.

Who would want to invest in a country about to be

bombed back to the middle ages? The least likely to do so would be Singaporeans. This hi-

PM holds comment on nuke threat

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Sunday declined comment on Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's statement that Islamabad might use nuclear weapons against India as a last resort in the event of a war.

"I will not like to comment till I see the entire statement," Vajpayee told reporters here before leaving on a two-nation tour of Singapore and Cambodia. He had been asked to comment on Musharraf's statement in an interview to a German magazine reported by *The Guardian*.

PTI, New Delhi

tech, peaceful and disciplined nation is not a likely buyer of the curious South Asian logic that nuclear capability is just to threaten an adversary, not necessarily for use.

Since 1991, when India embarked upon its reforms programme, Singapore, under its hard talking premier

Goh Chok Tong, has been a true backer of her dreams

of integration with the global economy. It has committed more than \$ 1.5 billion in investment in India, but only about 30 per cent of that has fructified.

India's complex democratic system where governments are unstable and delivery systems unreliable, has always erected some mental blocks among prospective investors. Now Gujarat and December 13 have exacerbated the problem. Vajpayee needs all the luck he can get.

Arun Shourie, who is accompanying Vajpayee, has the responsibility to placate anticipated fears. Gujarat, say sources in the Prime Minister's entourage, will be explained as a "localised" problem. The border stand-off is a greater problem. Shourie faces an uphill task pointing out that the greatest Indo-Pak military build up is, nothing but an exaggerated war game. Singaporeans are not known to understand the grey area between war threats and actual war. Memories of the Japanese occupation in World War II still run deep.

East by North-East

By C. Raja Mohan

40-11
6
9-8 PM

YANGON, APRIL 5. India has looked East for nearly a decade. But now, it has got a new prism to shape that vision — the development of its own north-eastern regions by linking them to South-East Asia through a variety of transport links.

Gaining connectivity for the North-East and the liberation of its economic energies has been the mantra of the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, as he lends a new focus to India's policy towards Myanmar and South-East Asia.

Mr. Singh has a strong personal interest in the North-East having served in the 1962 war with China in Arunachal Pradesh and as the Bharatiya Janata Party's coordinator for the North-East some years ago.

Focusing on road and rail links to Myanmar and South-East Asia is a good idea whose time has come. For the South-East Asian nations are looking at a variety of transport projects that link up the region with each other and the large Chinese and Indian markets.

India's emphasis on connecting the North-East to the outside world could not have come at a more propitious time, for it is part of a larger project to build Eurasian land and rail corridors that could connect Singapore to Istanbul and Europe via both the Subcontinent and China.

Earlier this year, officials from China, Thailand and Laos met and agreed in principle to build a highway connecting Bangkok with Kunming in the thriving Yunnan province of China through Laos. Thailand also has plans to build another highway linking it with Vietnam through Laos. That will give Thailand access to the Danang port on the Vietnamese coastline. To the East, Thailand

hopes to connect this road to Moulmein in Myanmar. India opened last year the road linking Tamu on the border with Myanmar with Kalewa and Kalamyo and from there to Mandalay, the commercial heart of Myanmar.

The essence of the triangular road diplomacy among India, Myanmar and Thailand is about linking the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea. In economic and strategic terms, that will be no small change for India.

Think of being able to drive from Kolkata to Bangkok to do some shopping over an extended weekend. Visualise giving the

ROADS AND RIVALS

North-East India the long-awaited connection to Vietnam. After all Tinsukhia in Assam is closer to Vietnam than to Southern India.

Think of all the commercial potential of expanding free trade arrangements among India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, South East Asia and China. Think of India's political standing in South-East a decade down the road.

Indian foreign policy is dreaming big about the East. After all it was money from the Foreign Office budget that financed the road from the Manipur border to Mandalay. It cost India only £ 20 millions but for the Indian bureaucracy it was a big mental leap and took nearly eight years to implement.

India's East by North-East strategy will not succeed unless it is matched by strong support from within the Government which needs to demonstrate some urgency hammering out free trade agreements with the South East Asian nations and strengthen the infrastructure in the North Eastern region. After

all highways to Myanmar and Indo-China are not of much use, if there are no good roads within the North-East.

If India is dreaming big about the East, China is thinking bigger. China naturally has more resources and greater purposefulness in pursuing strategic aims. China has moved swiftly in recent years to link its market with those in Myanmar, Thailand and Indo-China. All we can say about New Delhi is that the Indian tortoise has at least joined the fray with the Chinese hare.

While India is looking at access to South China Sea, China is pushing for an access to Indian Ocean and the eastern parts of the Subcontinent. The big project China has in mind is the so-called "Irrawaddy Corridor", which will begin in Kunming and could end up either in Yangon in southern Myanmar or reach the Western coast of Myanmar facing the Indian Ocean.

A road from Kunming to Ruili on the Chinese border with Myanmar already exists. Ruili will be connected to the Bhamo on the Irrawaddy river — and Yangon is 1,300 km downstream.

China's interior provinces such as Yunnan, Sichuan and Gizhou will no longer have to depend on the far-away ports on China's eastern sea board and reach out to the world through the Indian Ocean.

Relations between India and Thailand are going through an excellent patch. The Thai Foreign Minister, Surakiart Sathirathai, and his delegation are travelling with Mr. Singh on the special air force plane that will take him to the triangular meeting in Yangon that will formally convene on Saturday.

THE HINDU

India's tightrope walk on West Asia crisis upsets PLO, Israel

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's special envoy Hani Al-Hasan has handed over a set of proposals to the Indian government, suggesting steps that could be taken by the Indian government. Mr Hasan called on principal secretary to the Prime Minister, Brajesh Mishra, and handed over a letter from Mr Arafat addressed to the Prime Minister.

While India continued to tread the tightrope on the deepening West Asia crisis, the middle of the road stand has apparently left both Israel and Palestine dissatisfied, running the risk of alienating both.

Palestinian ambassador Khalid El-Sheikh told *The Times of India*, "We are hoping that India will take a stronger position and react immediately in a manner that helps stop and halt this aggression".

Palestine has been attempting to broaden its appeal to the Indian leadership and special envoy Mr Hasan called on a number of leaders across the political spectrum.

Mr Sheikh's appeal found backing from the ambassador of the League of Arab States Mission, Dr Mahmud Husein Gaddafi. Mr Gaddafi said that while the Arab

states were happy with the stand taken by India at the UN Security Council, "Arab world is waiting for a more positive stand and support for the Arab cause. We are confident in our hopes in view of the historical ties between the Arab world and India."

India's careful use of language has, however, not prevented Israel from reacting angrily to the various statements in support of Chairman Arafat. Israeli displeasure was communicated to the Indian government through diplomatic channels, even though the statements have so far stopped short of naming Israel or describing its actions as aggression.

Indian officials, however, feel that India should not rush in and side with either of the parties, destroying its channels of communication. "India is in a unique position, with lines open to Israel, Palestine and the U.S. We have got an advantage that is unmatched by anyone, except perhaps Egypt. It is an asset and we have to see when, how and what is the best way to use it," senior government officials stated, indicating that the question of further involvement was still under consideration.

Vajpayee to stress look-east policy

Saurabh Shukla
New Delhi, March 29

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee's two-nation tour, scheduled for next month, is aimed at promoting New Delhi's efforts to forge an effective 'look East' policy. The tour to Singapore and Cambodia is scheduled from April 7-11.

South Block insiders say the visit assumes importance as In-

dia is keen to develop its ties with Singapore and Cambodia ahead of the Indo-ASEAN summit scheduled in November.

Vajpayee will reach Singapore on April 7 and will have official engagements the next day. He will meet his counterpart Goh Chok Tong and also call on the Singapore President S R Nathan.

A founding member of the ASEAN, Singapore played a piv-

otal role in India's entry as a full dialogue partner and as a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum, where Singapore was the country coordinator.

Analysts feel the two countries have a common interest in the security of the region and in fighting terrorism. There is also a strong economic component as Singapore has expressed interest in investing in areas such as telecom and airports in India.



ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE

India, China set time for talks on LAC

Beijing, March 29

INDIA AND China today agreed on a timeframe to clarify the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and decided to hold a series of high-level meetings in the next six months, including the first-ever dialogue on counter-terrorism.

The two sides agreed to exchange sample maps of the western sector by the end of the year, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh said after a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Tang Jiaxuan in Beijing. Thereafter, the two sides would exchange maps on the LAC in the eastern sector early next year. The two countries have completed confirmation and clarification of the middle sector of the LAC.

Singh landed in India today on the first direct flight from India to China. The two nations were linked directly by air yesterday when a flight carrying 66 Chinese delegates landed at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi.

Singh caught his return flight on a five-day official visit

at strengthening Sino-Indian ties.

Jiaxuan said the direct air link would not just enhance cooperation and exchanges to facilitate bilateral relation. "More importantly, it will greatly shorten the distance between our two countries in the political sense."

"It is a great privilege and honour for me, as External Affairs Minister of India, to arrive in this historic city of Beijing on the inaugural direct air service between India and China," Singh said on his arrival. "I bring to our great neighbours, the friendly people of the People's Republic of China, the greetings and best wishes of all Indians."

Singh said Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee would visit China later this year, adding that the Chinese Government had also welcomed the proposal for a visit by Defence Minister George Fernandes.

Singh called on Vice-Premier Qian Qichen at the Zhongnabaoi Palace, the seat of Chinese leadership. Qian hoped Singh's visit would "open up new pages" in warm and friendly relations. He

also met with Dai Bingguo, Minister of the International Liaison Department of the Communist Party.

He described his talks with Tang and other Chinese leaders as "very productive and comprehensive".

"The establishment of this comprehensive programme of dialogue on various subjects, the efforts of the last four years or so to put India-China relations on a certain fixed and predictable rail have now borne tangible results," he said.

Singh said the first meeting of the annual bilateral dialogue mechanism on counter-terrorism would be held in New Delhi on April 23.

The third bilateral security dialogue would be held in Beijing in July-August this year and the 14th session of the joint working group on the boundary issue would be held in New Delhi in August-September this year.

The next meeting of the eminent Persons' Group comprising leading personalities from various disciplines would be held in Beijing in May.

IANS

Jaswant Singh heads East

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, MARCH 28. The travel of the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, to eastern South East Asia, beginning tomorrow, is about establishing physical links with various neighbours that had been disconnected over the decades. His visit to China will mark the creation of a direct air corridor between the world's two most populous nations and neighbours. And his visit to Myanmar will be about gaining land access to friendly nations in South East Asia.

The inaugural flight of China Eastern Airlines between New Delhi and Beijing that Mr. Singh takes tonight reflects a new and pragmatic phase in the relations between the two Asian giants. That it has taken so long to have a direct air link between the two capitals underscores the kind of political rigidity that had delayed normal bilateral ties.

But now in an important change, trade and travel will now begin to make their impact on the overall relationship. Bilateral commerce has galloped in the last few years to touch \$ 4 billions last year. During the visit of the Chinese Premier, Zhu Rongji, earlier this year, the two sides have agreed to take it to a healthy \$ 10 billions in the next few years.

If we include trade with Hong Kong and

Taiwan, "Greater China" already accounts for a substantial portion of India's external trade. And direct air links will make it easier for businessmen and ordinary people to travel across the mighty barrier of Himalayas.

Even as growing trade relations give a better balance to Sino-Indian relations, the two sides are broadening the political agen-

NEWS ANALYSIS

da. After his talks with the Chinese leadership in the next few days, a mechanism for bilateral consultations on the threat from international terrorism is likely to be announced.

Although China and India are engaged in cooperating with a number of other nations on terrorism, there had been some political inhibitions in the past about mutual cooperation on the sensitive subject. There was some reluctance in Beijing to be seen as joining the Indian campaign against the sources of terrorism radiating out of Pakistan. But those inhibitions appear to have been put aside, at least for the moment, since September 11. From Beijing, Mr. Singh will head to South Korea after a brief halt in Shanghai, the glittering heart of a China on the move. In Seoul, Mr. Singh's talks will focus on unfolding political situation in North East Asia.

After the U.S. has targeted the North Korean regime as part of the new confrontation with the "axis of evil" across the world, political uncertainty has come to envelop the divided Korean peninsula. The Korean peninsula is no longer remote to security concerns in the Subcontinent, thanks to well-established connections between the missile programmes of North Korea and Pakistan.

Of considerable interest will be Mr. Singh's exploration of the prospects for a road link between India and Thailand through Myanmar. The Foreign Ministers from the three countries will meet in Yangon on April 6 to discuss the transport corridor which could eventually link up to the ports in Vietnam.

Building road networks in Southern Asia has emerged as a major strategic priority for all the nations in the region, including China, and a range of ideas are in play. India has already built a road link to Myanmar that was inaugurated in February 2001 by Mr. Singh. He would be eager to push this road link into the heart of Indo-China.

Creating physical connectivity between India and Indo-China through Myanmar and Thailand is likely to give a big boost to the economic development of the sensitive North Eastern region as well as increase New Delhi's strategic profile in South East Asia.

29 MAR 2002

India's new neighbour

By C. Raja Mohan

Instead of objecting to American military presence in the region, India must leverage it to move the neighbourhood towards peace and prosperity.

THE UNITED States of America is India's newest neighbour. American troops are now in Pakistan and Afghanistan. As part of the ongoing war against international terrorism, the U.S. has warned that it would confront the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) if it undermines the present peace process in Sri Lanka. The U.S. is also offering military assistance to Nepal to fight the Maoist threat. Traditionalists in the Indian foreign policy community are squirming with unease at the turn of events since September 11. It is possible to argue however that the growing U.S. engagement in the region is an extraordinary opportunity to transform the international relations of the subcontinent.

The new sense that the American military presence in the subcontinent could be stabilising and productive runs counter to the idea of a "Monroe Doctrine" that seems to have animated Indian strategic thinking about its neighbourhood. That India must try and exclude other major powers from operating in the subcontinent, like the U.S. in Latin America, was an objective Jawaharlal Nehru himself emphasised. India's insistence on maintaining special and exclusive relations with its smaller neighbours became part of India's foreign policy tradition. Nehru's daughter's muscular policies towards the neighbours in demanding strict bilateralism and opposing the presence of other powers in the region was called the "Indira Doctrine". Rajiv Gandhi's punitive actions against Nepal for the monarchy's dalliance with China and his demand on Sri Lanka in 1987 not to give military bases to any external power reflected the same trend.

The time has come for India, however, to look back and see how effective this Indian attempt has been, whether it is sustainable, and if not think of alternative ways of stabilising the subcontinent. First, effectiveness. India never succeeded in implementing its own version of a Monroe Doctrine for the subcontinent. Pakistan successfully resisted this from the outset and drew the U.S. and China into the regional

equation. The U.S. involvement in the region was largely guided by Cold War considerations of containing communism and the former Soviet Union in Asia. American policy in the region was not driven by a fundamental dissonance with India.

China believes it has an interest and the right to develop full and untrammelled relations with all the countries in the subcontinent. Over the decades Beijing has developed an "all-weather" partnership with Pakistan. China's ties with India's other neighbours, too, have steadily expanded over the decades, with or without India's acquiescence. Unlike China, Russia was willing to defer to Indian sensitivities in the subcontinent. That was reinforced by a *de facto* alliance between New Delhi and Moscow during the Cold War. But Russia too intervened with its military forces in Afghanistan for nearly a decade during the 1980s, setting off a train of developments whose consequences are still reverberating in the subcontinent.

In sum, India could not prevent the other great powers from injecting themselves into the affairs of the subcontinent. Meanwhile, its efforts to prevent them from doing so have resulted in a growing resentment against New Delhi in its neighbourhood and introduced frustrating complexities into India's regional policy. Huge anti-India lobbies have consolidated in every one of India's smaller neighbours, an easy target for political mobilisation by not only the great powers but Pakistan as well.

The political elites in India's neighbouring capitals have played these sentiments effectively to keep New Delhi off balance with constant threats to bring another great power into play. As a result, India's own ability to develop constructive relations with the neighbours has suffered. More funda-

mentally, India's ability to ensure the security of the smaller neighbours has been undermined. The disastrous intervention in Sri Lanka showed how the warring groups in a neighbouring country seek to draw India into their internal conflicts on one side or the other and eventually target India itself as the threat. As a result, India now has little inclination to either mediate in the Sri Lankan conflict or directly involve itself in Kathmandu's war against the Maoists. An intervention by New Delhi would end up making India itself a big political issue.

WORLD VIEW

Second, sustainability. In a globalising world, India cannot hope to keep the other great powers out of the subcontinent. As every one of the South Asian nations seeks cooperation with the rest of the world, the economic presence of other countries, China in particular, will rapidly grow in the subcontinent. As nationalism and independent identities grow among India's neighbours, the old ways of doing political business in the region are not going to work. Not surprisingly, India, unwilling to be drawn into the Sri Lankan conflict had to let the Norwegians broker a peace process in the island-nation. India also cannot hope to retain the outmoded 1950 treaty of peace and friendship with Nepal as the cornerstone of bilateral relations.

Third, looking at the alternatives, India has no choice but to quickly and consciously modernise its relations with its smaller neighbours taking into account the new global and regional realities. Contrary to the widespread fears, the new external context may, in fact, facilitate India's own strategic interest in restructuring the region.

The efforts by all the nations of the subcontinent to liberalise and globalise offers a historic opportunity to promote regional integration around the Indian market. The growing American

and Chinese economic presence in the region will facilitate rather than hinder the integration of the subcontinent.

On the political side, there will be many in India who will be tempted to argue against the American presence in our neighbourhood on the basis of old prejudices and mindsets. India's approach to American military involvement in South Asia, which might be with us for a long while, must be defined by two considerations. Does it serve India's interests? And is it based on a long-term convergence of interests between India and the U.S.?

The American military involvement in the region after September 11 has brought some immediate gains for India in the form of the ouster of the Taliban regime, a reduction of the influence of Pakistan in Afghanistan, and more fundamentally increased U.S. pressure on the Pakistani military to give up cross-border terrorism and launch the nation on a new course emphasising modernity rather than jihad. None of these objectives, to be honest with ourselves, could have been accomplished by India on its own. India also should have little reason to oppose some welcome pressure on the LTTE to give up its old tactics and limited U.S. military assistance to Nepal in defeating the threat from Maoist extremism.

Cynics might want to suggest that the above developments might merely be unintended consequences of September 11 and that New Delhi must remain wary of a long-term American presence in the region. But a confident view would suggest that there is a new convergence of political interests between New Delhi and Washington to defeat the forces of extremism and terrorism in the region, end the economic partition of the subcontinent, and promote political moderation and economic modernisation in the region. Instead of objecting to American military presence in the region, India must leverage it to move the neighbourhood towards peace and prosperity. To make this work, we need to see sustained and transparent consultation and cooperation between New Delhi and Washington to promote a different future for the subcontinent.

8/2/03
19-10

28/3

THE HINDU

Pak remarks an interference: MEA

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 4 - The government today sought to play down the criticism from several international quarters for its handling of the situation in Gujarat. The Ministry of External Affairs highlighted the fact that Pakistan's comments on the matter were "unacceptable" as they amounted to "interference" in India's internal affairs.

The "consistent hostility and

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animosity" from Pakistan places them "in a different bracket" from other comments, the MEA spokesperson said. "Pakistan is seeking to exaggerate" the incidents in Gujarat and "is seeking to derive propagandist advantage" from them, Mrs Nirupama Rao said, in response to a question.

She denounced the statements made by Major-General Rashid Qureishi, the spokesman for the Pakistani President, General Pervez Musharraf, on Gujarat as "fabricated", and said that a

9.6 Pm
"larger design" behind the violence needed to be investigated in the light of the role of Pakistani intelligence agencies in fomenting terrorism in this country.

"Given the profile of Pakistan's activities which we have seen over the past (years) and the involvement of Pakistani Intelligence agencies in promoting terrorism in India, in the normal circumstances, there is every reason for us to investigate whether there is a larger design to this whole situation," the spokesperson said.

THE STATESMAN

5 MAR 2002

'Pak. must act before talks'

MADRID, FEB. 14. Pakistan must act against militant groups in Kashmir before India resumes talks, the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, has said.

"Were the Pakistan Government and Pervez Musharraf to actually begin to implement what they say they will — act against terrorists and terrorism — then... for every one step that Pakistan takes, we will take two steps," Mr. Singh told Reuters on Wednesday.

"I cannot have the pistol of terrorism put against my temple and (it) said that this will continue to be employed as a pre-dialogue negotiating tactic. I can't accept it," he said.

In an interview in Madrid following a meeting with Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Maria Az-

nar, Mr. Singh said the atmosphere needed to be conducive to dialogue before talks or any troop withdrawals from Kashmir could begin.

Mr. Singh said he was disappointed it had taken Pakistan so long to arrest Islamic militant, Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh (the prime suspect in the kidnap of American scribe, Daniel Pearl) adding that there had not yet been any moves towards detaining the others.

He recounted how he had personally been forced to free Sheikh Omar, as the Briton is known, in December 1999 in exchange for passengers of an IA plane hijacked to Khandahar.

He did not believe Sheikh Omar would be returned to India, but said he hoped he would

be sent to the U.S. for trial.

Asked if he was concerned over closer ties between the U.S. and Pakistan following a visit to Washington by Gen. Musharraf, Mr. Singh said: "Good luck to the United States of America".

He said such links — which had developed quickly since the U.S. won Pakistani backing for its war against the Taliban — would have no impact on India's relationship with the U.S., which remained good.

He said India would continue to be critical of U.S. policy positions when it disagreed with them.

"Is there any obligation that we should not be critical of the policies of any country that we don't agree with?" he asked. — Reuters

THE HINDU

1999 FEB 14

India, US dismiss Pak allegations on nuke tests

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 13 FEBRUARY

INDIA AND the US on Wednesday dismissed Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's allegations that India may have carried out a nuclear test. While the US state department rejected the notion outright, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, addressing an election rally, said Gen Musharraf's tactics were intended to "mislead the international community". He reiterated India's stand on observing a moratorium on nuclear tests.

Addressing security think-tanks in Washington DC, Gen Musharraf let fly what he himself categorised as "inconclusive" allegations. "The missile test carried out by India and news of a possible nuclear test is

most untimely and, may I also say, provocative," he said, in a speech intended to fuel speculation.

India rejected the allegations as being "totally false and baseless". The MEA spokesperson, Ms Nirupama Rao, said it was Pakistan's version of "timed release capsule of diversionary tactics". Referring to a series of wild allegations flying from Pakistan — first, of India's having a hand in Daniel Pearl's abduction, and then, about Omar Sheikh being an Indian plant — the spokesperson said "it seems to be the kite-flying season in Pakistan".

In Washington, asked to clarify his claim, General Musharraf said, "There were certainly indications. I did share these with the US leadership. I can't give conclusive evidence of it, but I thought if at all



there was a possibility, it should be checked."

Although doubts remained whether Gen Musharraf was referring to a test that had already hap-

ing that the US will have a fair idea if such tests were conducted. "We are pleased that there have been no nuclear tests since 1998, and we expect that there will be no more nuclear from either side," a senior Bush Administration official said.

Indian officials say Gen Musharraf cannot treat the missile test as provocative since India had informed it advance. In fact, in an interview to the Financial Times a couple of days ago, foreign minister Jaswant Singh reiterated India's moratorium on conducting nuclear tests. In fact, of late, the Pakistani President has shown a sense of desperation, which is being attributed to the tremendous pressure at home and from India and the international community. Gen Musharraf, since long, has been in search of

pressure points where US can impose its weight on India.

At the election rally, Mr Vajpayee said: "General Musharraf said in the US that India was going to conduct another nuclear test. But he has been told that 'We (United States) know they (India) are not doing it,'" he said.

Having tossed the nuclear balloon, Gen Musharraf then went on to call for mediation in the Kashmir dispute. The US then had to make it equally clear that Washington did not support mediation till both sides asked for it. India, predictably, has ruled out mediation or third party role in Kashmir. The Prime Minister clarified that Pakistan could not ask for mediation since it was in illegal possession of one-third of Kashmir.

51-3 OIC: 9/8/02
(Continued from page 1)

conduct of the armed forces in a situation of conflict and what can loosely be construed as 'state terrorism.'

In the just concluded sixth session of the Ad hoc committee meeting on the CCIT at New York, the OIC draft text proposes for Article 18, Paragraph 2 that "the activities of the parties during an armed conflict, including in situations of foreign occupation, as those terms are understood under international humanitarian law, which are governed by that law, are not governed by this Convention."

This terminology opens a window for Pakistan to exploit in the Kashmir situation, that India calls terrorism and Pakistan calls a freedom struggle. There is no way India could allow the OIC passage to go through in the draft without exposing its Kashmir policy to international scrutiny, which is what Pakistan wants.

Senior officials are agreed that the OIC acts as a front for the Pakistani viewpoint in disputes between India and Pakistan.

THE STATESMAN

FEB 2002

MP teams return, impact

7/2 'positive'

Sf-6
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb. 6. — Just back from a tour of Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Kuwait, where she led parliamentary delegations as part of a diplomatic initiative to inform the Islamic world of the details of the attack on Parliament, Dr Najma Heptullah felt there was much greater understanding of and sympathy for India's position on the scourge of terrorism. Gaining access to the authorities in these countries, Dr Heptullah, Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha, felt they had managed to successfully advocate India's cause that terrorism was the issue, not Islam.

The OIC secretary general said that the OIC would try to prevail upon the Pakistani President, that he should implement the promises made in his 12 January speech, BJP leader, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said.

India, Nepal concerned over ISI network

Sf-6 7/2
NEW DELHI, Feb. 6. — India and Nepal are concerned over the mushrooming of madrasas and the growing ISI network along the border areas and have decided to work jointly to tackle the menace. The two neighbouring countries would cooperate in exchange of operational intelligence and in combating crime and terrorism.

The Nepalese home secretary, Mr Keshav Raj Bhandari, along with a ten-member delegation today met the home minister, Mr LK Advani, after he had delegation level talks with the home secretary on these issues. Nepal has sought assistance from India in tackling Maoist violence. — SNS

THE STATESMAN

7 FEB 2002

Foreign missions need to respect diplomatic norms

Thanks, but no thanks

By BRAHMA CHELLANEY



DON'T MEDDLE IN OUR AFFAIRS: Jaswant Singh at a press conference

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45-8 15/5

THE BLOODBATH in Gujarat is a reminder that there can be no external security without internal security. Internal security has been India's Achilles heel throughout history. Yet this failing continues to undercut the Indian State.

When a nation is internally divided or wracked by political or sectarian strife, outside interests would seek to take advantage. But for internal disunity, the British would not have ruled India. Such were the internal fissures that the British ruled vast India with Indian soldiers and bureaucrats.

The latest communal bloodletting, although limited to one state, presents India as internally torn. Not only has the government failed to clamp down on religious killings with an iron hand, but also acerbic attacks in the English-language media on the government for mismanaging everything, from Gujarat to defence and foreign policy, portray a picture of a nation adrift and at war with itself.

There is so much negativism in the national thinking and discussion, within and outside Parliament, that pessimism and despair are spreading, aiding violence. Rarely before has India sunk so low in its own esteem, or its highest leadership been found so wanting. India stands diminished not so much in international eyes as in its own eyes.

Foreign reaction to Gujarat, including media coverage, has been subdued despite the communal savagery. With international attention focused on the Israeli military actions against Palestinians and the continuing US anti-terrorist operations, Gujarat has received little global prominence because it is part of what is endemic in India — Hindu-Muslim violence, which has shaped Indian history. It is not viewed as a new story.

As a large, diverse and open society beset by problems of cohesion, India does not have to be tetchy about foreign reaction to its internal troubles. However, no government can accept unwarrantable foreign reaction in breach of rules of diplomacy. Such a problem over Gujarat has largely emanated from a few diplomatic missions based in New Delhi.

India's presentation of itself as a chaotic, rudderless democracy emboldened these missions to trans-

gress well-established diplomatic conventions. Foreign diplomats do not, as a rule, publicly comment on their host country's domestic matters, let alone leak their assessments to the local media. Violations of diplomatic norms can set a dangerous precedent, and the MEA was correct to promptly rebuke these missions. If missions can get away by breaking diplomatic rules, future Indian governments would find it difficult to stop foreign diplomats from openly interfering in domestic affairs.

To those Indians who see the continuing religious strife as a legacy of Britain's divide-and-rule colonial rule, it may not be a surprise that the British High Commission was the first to contravene diplomatic conventions when it purposely leaked the assessment of its junior diplomat who visited Gujarat. The mission not only refused to disassociate itself from the leak, but also disclosed the same report to the BBC despite a stinging letter from the MEA.

A mission that is often at a loss to decipher developments happening within its vicinity in New Delhi could not have fathomed such reality in Gujarat that it was compelled to reveal its diplomat's assessment in public interest. It has pointlessly hurt its main mission — to build up Indo-British ties. Those relations had been strengthened by the two post-September 11 subcontinental tours of Prime Minister Tony Blair, who impressed many as a smart statesman.

The European Union was wrong to emulate the British example. Media leaks and skewed comments by nameless diplomats are not the way to present a demarche on any

issue. A demarche is a confidential communication. The EU not only publicised in advance what the demarche said but it also turned its presentation into a public spectacle. It first cried foul that neither the foreign minister nor any MEA official would grant it an appointment to present the demarche, and then congratulated itself for having given the demarche to the Indian ambassador in Madrid when he, on his own, called on the EU's Asia director.

To be fair, the EU-related media leaks and slanted comments may have originated not from the EU mission in New Delhi but from one or more of its members' missions, including the British. Other egregious instances of violation of diplomatic etiquette were by Switzerland and another EU member, Finland. The visiting Swiss and Finnish foreign ministers, discarding specific advice by their host country, made public comments on Gujarat while on Indian soil, with the Swiss embassy even leaking details of official discussions on the subject.

Diplomacy by media leak is not an unknown practice. It usually involves a government leaking to its national press some information, true or untrue, about another country. But what has happened in New Delhi is extraordinary: foreign missions leaking information to the local media to embarrass their host nation. In any mature democracy, national interests are not compromised at the altar of partisan interests. A clear line separates national interests from the interests of the government in office. In taking on the government over any issue, opponents and critics do not take on

their country.

In India, the line between criticism of the government and criticism of the nation is in danger of getting blurred. This is apparent from two developments. One is the new ability of foreign missions to use the Indian media to discomfit India. The other is the effort of government critics to internationalise Gujarat. At a roundtable luncheon discussion hosted by a major power's ambassador, for example, an Indian guest earnestly pleaded for that country's intervention on Gujarat, only to be told by the envoy that his nation neither had any imaginative solutions to offer nor would like to teach India how to manage its domestic affairs.

If the communal genie in Gujarat is to be put back in the bottle, India will have to address that task in a bipartisan manner and with heavy-duty law enforcement. Internationalising it would only allow the wounds to fester and make the genie more unmanageable, with the sole gainer being foreign interests.

Had India been an autocratic State like China, with facts and access to violence-hit area tightly controlled, it may have been justifiable for EU to present a demarche seeking information, or for the British and Swiss missions to leak their views. But the British, Swiss and the EU will dare not do in Beijing what they did in New Delhi. Rather than respect India's democratic processes and open debate, they pitchforked themselves in the Indian debate through carefully crafted leaks that fired up the political atmosphere.

India needs to battle communalism not because some European missions errantly joined its national debate, but because it is bad for India. And it has to fight this scourge not to the satisfaction of some white men, but to the satisfaction of Indians of all faiths.

The rising political and sectarian divisiveness demands that India debate where it is headed. Despite the pretence that the land of the Mahatma believes in nonviolence, it is a violent society where riots are commonplace and human life is cheap. It is also a callous society that does not remember its bloodbaths. Once the current political brouhaha dies off, Gujarat and its victims would be forgotten, and the country's attention will turn to the next scandal or carnage.

The world's reaction to Gujarat

By Muchkund Dubey

HD-1 19/5

CONSIDERING THE magnitude of the atrocity perpetrated, and even now rampant, in Gujarat, the international reaction to it can be regarded as subdued. There was hardly any reaction for almost a month after the eruption of violence. Friendly foreign Governments were hoping India would not take too long to control the situation. When that did not happen, some of these Governments were obliged by their laws and pressure of public opinion, to react, but their reaction was confined to expressing concern and sorrow and hoping that the situation would be brought under control.

The visiting Swiss and Finnish Foreign Ministers expressed disquiet over the situation and conveyed their countries' concern to their Indian counterpart. The Canadian Minister of Inter-Governmental Affairs, also on a visit to India, in a noble humanitarian gesture, expressed his eagerness to participate in the peace march on Gujarat organised by the Defence Minister. In the British Parliament, the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, expressed his Government's "deep concern about the deaths and injuries on both sides of the religious divide in Gujarat". The joint statement issued at the end of the last meeting of the E.U. Council of Ministers contained only one line on Gujarat, expressing concern at the "sectarian violence". The United States' reaction was by far the most restrained.

Why has the international reaction to the Gujarat carnage been on such a low key? Essentially, the Governments of the Western and Islamic countries, which concern us most, have come to recognise India's great potential as a major player in the world and have admiration for and faith in Indian democracy. Like the vast majority of Indian citizens, these Governments have also come to believe that whichever Government is in power in India will uphold the fundamental democratic principles enshrined in the Constitution, which include the defence of secularism and non-discrimi-

The vantage position of India in the comity of nations now seems to be in jeopardy under the BJP-led Government at the Centre.

nation against and the protection of the minorities. These Governments have not so far brought themselves to believe that this trust has been betrayed by the Vajpayee Government. Given India's record of democracy and their stake in the country, they are still prepared to give it the benefit of the doubt. The other major reason for the subdued international reaction is the preoccupation of the U.S. and its principal allies with the global campaign against terrorism and that of most of these countries with the Palestinian issue.

Unfortunately, the Government of India's response to this minimum-must reaction of Foreign Governments has been totally out of proportion, unjustified and self-defeating. The External Affairs Ministry is reported to have refused, or at least unduly delayed, giving an appointment to local E.U. Ambassadors to make a demarche of an innocuous character on this matter. The E.U. was then obliged to issue a demarche to our Ambassador in Spain, the current E.U. President. The Ministry refused to call it a demarche on the basis of the puerile and specious arguments that a demarche is issued only when the Ambassador concerned is summoned and not when he goes on his own to the local Foreign Office, and that no demarche can be issued on a subject lying essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of a state. When a similar demarche was issued at the recent Senior Officers' meeting between India and the E.U. Troika, the Ministry thought it necessary to come out with the explanation that it was the Indian side which raised the issue and that it refused to accept the paper on the subject sought to be handed over by the E.U. delegation.

The statement issued by the Ministry on April 24 was an epitome of diplomatic over-reaction. The concern

and sorrow expressed by some foreign countries cannot be regarded as "contradictory to well-established norms of diplomacy", and even less so, as an "intrusion on India's domestic turf". There are numerous occasions when well-meaning and friendly foreign Governments have expressed concern, more in anguish rather than as a protest, at developments in the domestic spheres of another foreign country. India itself has expressed concern over such developments, particularly in its neighbouring countries. To characterise the mild and expected reactions of some of the E.U. member-countries as "injurious to the friendly relations that exist between India and E.U." is indeed self-defeating.

No doubt, the leaking out of the internal reports of the local missions of some of the E.U. member-countries transgressed the norms of diplomatic practice. That is why when the Indian External Affairs Minister brought it to the attention of his British counterpart, the latter promptly regretted the incident. It was legitimate to have protested against it. However, one would have wished the Ministry's statement to have remained confined to the leakage issue.

There is no evidence that there was a leakage of any internal report of the E.U. as a whole. Therefore, the lumping of the E.U. with individual European countries in the statement was most unfortunate. Besides, the substance of the internal reports leaked out by some foreign missions does not add anything to the reports carried by the national media and those submitted by individuals, their groups and institutions of unimpeachable integrity and authority, including the National Human Rights Commission, who visited the scenes of the Gujarat carnage.

The Prime Minister's observation at

the function in New Delhi on April 25, to mark the end of the celebrations of the 2600th birth anniversary of Lord Mahavir, that "we do not need to learn from others what secularism and pluralism are all about" is a typical exercise in political rhetoric and hypocrisy.

The Government of India simply cannot ignore the international implications of the Gujarat carnage. Hiding behind the doctrine of domestic jurisdiction on the quintessentially universalist issue of human rights is neither convincing nor of much use. A major recent change in the world situation, particularly after the end of the Cold War, has been the recrudescence of democracy and the universal acceptance of the values of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Given the heritage of Gandhi and Nehru and with our nearly half-a-century of democratic tradition, we had thought this had put India in a tremendously advantageous position vis-a-vis other developing countries, particularly some of our neighbours. The vantage position of India in the comity of nations now seems to be in jeopardy under the BJP-led Government at the Centre.

The discussion at the Senior Officers Meeting between India and the E.U. Troika demonstrated that the E.U. has no intention of making a big issue out of its demarche. It will be only too relieved if the Indian Government restores normalcy in Gujarat, thus making it possible for it not to pursue the issue further.

Of much greater concern is the possibility of India coming under the bilateral pressure of major Western countries and Islamic countries if the violence in Gujarat continues. However, this can also be managed, though at some cost. The principal concern should be what the carnage is going to do to our own society. If the forces which have unleashed violence in Gujarat are not controlled, the most disastrous consequence will be the nation divided and at war with itself; and its priorities in the economic and social fields relegated to the background.

THE HINDU

19 MAY 2002

NDA, Congress join hands for updating Patents Act

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: The ruling alliance and the main opposition Congress party joined hands in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday to pass a bill updating diverse aspects of the Patents Act, 1970. This now goes to the Lok Sabha.

The Act was amended comprehensively by Parliament once before, in March 1999, to incorporate India's World Trade Organisation treaty obligations on trade-related intellectual property rights. The government then decided to amend the main law itself, to encourage innovation and patenting, while meeting concerns on public health and safety issues. Its bill on the subject, tabled at the end

of 1999, was referred for examination to a committee of both houses.

The joint committee extensively rewrote the bill and the government accepted all recommendations of the committee. Left party MPs wanted to go further and tried to add their suggestions during the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill on Thursday; Congress and ruling alliance joined to reject these.

Commerce minister Murasoli Maran had a long meeting with Congress and Left seniors in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, at which points of friction were sorted and Congress desires assuaged by the assurance of a further series of amendments after a year or so. Left and minister agreed to disagree on

some points and, as a result, the former's opposition to sections of the bill was made without acrimony.

The bill updates definitions of inventions, provides uniform patent protection of 20 years for all categories of inventions, enables the government to decide whenever a patent is to be set aside when the public interest warrants it, besides giving it other reserve powers to licence the production and price of a product when a patent is so broken, provides an appellate board for appeals and changes various other provisions of existing law.

Maran spent a lot of time explaining the details of these reserve powers with the state and how these covered all sorts of contingencies.

'CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM HAS TO STOP'

We will not accept outside prescriptions: Jaswant

By K.V. Prasad

HD-1
8/5

NEW DELHI, MAY 7. The Government today rejected "prescriptions" by foreign countries on internal affairs, stating that while developments in Gujarat were "extremely regrettable," India could not be "spoken to."

"India will not accept it, as it did not after the 1998 (nuclear) tests to be told in prescriptive tone to do this or do that... not be spoken to from any position of assumed superiority or morality," the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, said in the Rajya Sabha while replying to a discussion on the working of his Ministry. India's response, he said, would be according to the channel — diplomatic or public — it came from.

Mr. Singh also rejected permitting any "outside" observers in Jammu and Kashmir where Assembly elections are due later this year. The conduct of polls there was within the domain of the Election Commission.

Reiterating that India was not willing to hold talks with Pakistan unless it gave up cross-border terrorism, Mr. Singh said New Delhi would not accept promotion of terrorism as an instrument of State policy or agree to it being employed as a "pre-negotiation tactic." It was for Pakistan to decide

what kind of bilateral relations it wanted to have in the long-term.

During his 50-minute reply, Mr. Singh touched upon a range of issues — relations with the United States, China, Afghanistan, Palestine and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the Vajpayee Government's approach to the non-aligned movement, support for India as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, and, in particular, the Congress leader, K. Natwar Singh's sharp criticism of the foreign policy.

Addressing the concerns of members, including Pranab Mukherjee (Congress) and P. G. Naryanan (AIADMK), he said the LTTE remained a banned organisation and New Delhi had reminded Colombo that its request for the extradition of the LTTE chief, V. Prabhakaran, was pending. The problems of the fishermen in the Palk Straits would be sorted out, he said.

Referring to Afghanistan, Mr. Singh said since the installation of the Hamid Karzai interim government, New Delhi had been extending full cooperation. India's interest was in the welfare of the people of Afghanistan. On NAM, he said India was active behind the scenes without hurting the sentiments of the members while persuading

J.F. Prasad

the current Chairman, South Africa, on the urgent need to revitalise the movement. New issues such as terrorism and ecology were confronting foreign policy planning and "we cannot live in yesterday." Another challenge was the growth of NATO, with Russia virtually becoming its member. New Delhi had clarified its position on Palestine on several occasions. As for Sino-Indian relations, they were progressing well with both countries having exchanged maps on the Line of Actual Control in the mid-sector. The western sector would come next.

Earlier, initiating the discussion, Natwar Singh criticised the Government's foreign policy and asked whether it had one towards Pakistan. The Government had given up the Nehruvian policy and had also turned away from NAM.

Natwar Singh said the foreign missions could not be faulted for their comments on Gujarat. Islamic nations were watching the developments in Gujarat and wanted the Centre to state what it would do if 4 million Indians employed in the Gulf countries were asked to pack up and leave as a reaction to Gujarat. And whether the Government had a substitute for NAM and what were the contents of discussion with the U.S. on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and Pakistan policy?

THE HINDU

8 MAY 2002

Jaswant rejects foreign sermons

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 7

INDIA WILL not accept any prescription on its internal affairs from other countries, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh told the Rajya Sabha today.

He was replying to a debate on the functioning of his ministry, with Opposition leaders such as Pranab Mukherjee and Natwar Singh criticising the Government's handling of violence in Gujarat.

"India will not accept being told in prescriptive terms, do this, that or the other. Also, as in 1998 (in the aftermath of Pokhran II nuclear test), India will not be spoken to from assumed positions of superiority or greater morality," he said.

C Ramachandraiah of TDP took the Government to task today for being over-sensitive to criticism by foreign countries.

He said the international damage control exercise by New Delhi would be of no use as long as violence continued in Gujarat.

Pushed on the defensive by the Opposition, Singh said his ministry was always ready to discuss the issue at a diplomatic level with any country, provided they did not take the issue to the media.

The minister also ruled out external observers for the Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, saying that this was entirely the Election Commission's domain.

He said Delhi had made it clear that the Kashmir issue had to be resolved bilaterally between India and Pakistan.

He said that India was ready for a dialogue on all issues with Pakistan provided it stopped sponsoring terrorist activity in Jammu and Kashmir.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

2007

The international concern for Gujarat should have been appreciated by India

See them see us

BY J.N. DIXIT



MEA CULPA: Jaswant Singh and Nirupama Rao

HT 8
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THE INDIAN media and the Indian people remain concerned and disoriented due to the continuing violence in Gujarat despite some steps taken by the Centre to remedy the situation, the last being the appointment of K.P.S. Gill as security advisor to the chief minister of Gujarat. There is widespread description and cogitation about the domestic ramifications of developments in Gujarat. Equally important is the implications for India's external relations and its credibility in the international community.

External, governmental and media reactions to the events in Gujarat have been that of concern and criticism. From this, the general conclusion has been drawn by our media and public opinion that our external credibility has been affected.

The second facet of our reaction is the official claim that external value judgments are an interference in our domestic jurisdiction. Ambiguous reports that the Indian delegation refused to accept some documents which the European Union delegation wished to hand over to us expressing their concern on May 3 have generated the impression that we are on the defensive and are taking refuge in the arguments of sovereignty and domestic jurisdiction.

The technical point to be remembered on this issue is that when delegations of the two countries meet, their discussions are either summarised in an 'agreed minutes' or a 'joint statement' if it is to be a bilateral exercise. The question of one side handing over a critical or prescriptive document to the other is not normal international practice — unless it is an ultimatum preceding a possible conflict situation.

Two issues to be examined are whether it is correct to say that India's credibility as a pluralist democracy has been affected. The second issue concerns our asserting the inviolability of our sovereignty and jurisdiction. I have had occasions of discussing both the issues with senior levels in the government over the last ten days. The assessments given to me merit attention.

Should Indians come to the conclusion that the incidents of communal violence with all its attendant factors in Gujarat have irretrievably destroyed India's credibility as a secular, pluralist democracy? India has gone through such violence and upheavals before and has shown resilience to transcend them and get

back on the track of its basic socio-cultural and ideological moorings.

The reaction of public opinion across the country to the events in Gujarat is proof that what happens in one state should not form the criteria by which the substance of India's credibility should be questioned. I would go one step further and say that the reason why we are committed to democracy, pluralism and secularism is because India is a country with a Hindu majority firmly rooted in the genuine principles of the Hindu socio-religious ethos.

One accepts the argument that India's long-term credibility need not be doubted. But the very principles which we claim as the composite terms of reference of our polity rooted in the above Hindu ethos stand eroded and diminished because of Gujarat. There is an emerging consensus on this point across the spectrum of political parties. There is also the consensus to overcome this denial of our basic principles. We should welcome this, if it becomes a political reality without loss of time.

As far as our asserting domestic jurisdiction goes, my interlocutors from the government told me that there are no inhibitions about discussing external criticism or evaluations. The objection is to foreign governments and entities being prescriptive about what we should do in terms of the internal governance of the country. Ministers of foreign governments wishing to join peace marches in Gujarat or suggesting the manner in which enquiries should be made on the incidents are not acceptable.

If India's reactions were articulated in detail in this manner they

would have sounded logical and unexceptional. Unfortunately, government spokespersons practised the virtue of brevity which became counter-productive in this case. India criticised the international community and important governments for "injecting themselves in what is essentially an internal matter in the sphere of domestic jurisdiction of India." The logic behind this statement as conveyed to me should have formed the statement itself.

Prime Minister Vajpayee's statement that India does not need lectures on secularism or human rights from foreign quarters would have been better understood if our official reactions on the lines explained to me had preceded his statement.

It is pertinent nevertheless to take note of external reactions and their short-term implications. At the operational level, both domestic and international politics are not essentially rooted in objective facts or logic, but on general perceptions. Most of the external official criticism has come from the western democracies who want to shore up their credibility with Islamic nations in the context of their ongoing campaign against terrorism — a motivation animated by vital strategic and economic interests in the Gulf, Central Asia, West Asia and the Maghreb.

Secondly, deliberate leaks of reports and assessments prepared by foreign embassies have more intriguing motivations than what has been discerned in general assessments. But we also have to take note of short-term and substantive aspects of external reactions.

Mark Tully, one of the most knowledgeable, long-serving and

sympathetic British journalists in India, gave a perceptive assessment when he stated that the violence against Muslims in Gujarat seems to be part of a systematic agenda of the BJP and its associate organisations like the VHP and Bajrang Dal. He based this assessment on the violence against Christians, the stand taken by the government on conversion of Hindus to other religions, and the pattern of violence against Muslims over the last decade.

The point to ponder is whether by stone-walling these critical assessments — using the argument of State sovereignty and jurisdiction in a mechanistic manner — will it serve our vital interests or enhance our credibility as a modern democracy? It must be remembered that traditional concepts and practices related to State sovereignty, political and territorial, stand diminished due to contemporary trends in international law and politics.

Issues like good governance, democracy, respect for human rights and attempts at ethnic or communal cleansing are a matter of legitimate international concern. Secondly, India itself is a party to all the major international conventions and undertakings relating to these issues. More importantly, India has expressed similar concern in the past about the plight of Bengalis in East Pakistan, about the predicament of Sri Lankan Tamils and about animosity against people of Indian origin in Fiji. We should have been realistic and adroit in governmental reactions to external assessments of violence in Gujarat.

I have no hesitation in being prescriptive in the matter in the context of my professional experience. We should have expressed general appreciation for the international concern for aberrations in Gujarat. We should have emphasised that we share concerns expressed by the international community with greater intensity than them because the situation affects India's vital interests.

We should have assured the international community that India would be taking all necessary and relevant remedial action and that India expects general support of the international community in its efforts at this difficult juncture. We should have emphasised that as a country, India has the resilience to face criticism and the confidence to neutralise that criticism by appropriate policy decisions and actions.

Debilitating denials

SE A MEA's credibility compromised JS

Egg on the face is often the result of being too clever by half. The Ministry of External Affairs' discomfort over the European Union's criticism of the horror of Gujarat has been rendered all the more disconcerting because of puerile attempts at finding technical shortcomings in media reports. Unable to deny that the EU had expressed misgivings, South Block opted to question the manner in which the message was conveyed. Reminiscent of less than competent lawyers, it indulged in splitting hairs over whether it had been a demarche or a verbal message, which was nothing more than a diversionary manoeuvre. Eventually it had to accept that the EU had conveyed the message. That such a message followed the MEA's contention that such observations amounted to "interference" was confirmation that such puerile arguments had been treated with the contempt they deserved.

Yet it is not just "face" that the MEA lost in the process. The line that it chose to take could create some long-term difficulties for its official spokesperson. The "Foreign Office" spokesperson is no ordinary media-relations official, he or she is the voice of India in the international sphere — at times the only voice — and it is expected to be a voice of authority. Using the spokesperson-route to the accompaniment of dubious denials to limit the damage only compromised the credibility of that office. Some of that must trickle down to a personal level too. Which could cost the nation dearly in the days ahead. The MEA knows all too well that Gujarat has severely impacted upon India's international standing. While it seems determined to be helpless in dealing with the situation on the ground it could at least avoid attempting to trivialise the challenge. The existence of that challenge is not something it can deny. //

THE STATESMAN

19/11/07

GUJARAT VIOLENCE / E.U. INSISTENCE ON DEMARCHE

We are surprised, says India

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 30. While rejecting the "so-called demarche" by the European Union on Gujarat, India today reiterated that it opposed any "interference" in its internal affairs.

"We are surprised at the European Union's insistence on making it an issue of public controversy," the spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, Nirupama Rao, said in response to a question. She said this in the light of the meeting between India's Ambassador in Spain, Dilip Lahiri, and the E.U.'s political director on Asia earlier this month. The E.U. has described the contents of this interaction as a demarche — a view that has been rejected by India.

Official sources here say that a demarche is a specific technical term. A communication by a foreign government — verbal or otherwise — cannot be construed as a demarche unless it has been specified as such. During the meeting with Mr. Lahiri, the E.U.'s political director had made no such specification. Incidentally, Mr. Lahiri is in India along with the Indian envoy based in Brussels. These officials are here to partici-

pate in the senior officials' meeting with their counterparts belonging to the E.U. troika countries that will take place later this week.

According to the spokesperson, India has already rejected foreign interference through media leaks and slanted comments on what she described as "unidentified foreign diplomats." India expected the "foreign countries to show respect for the democratic debate that is taking place internally and not become a part of it."

Sources here stressed that India's objections were not on the fact that the E.U. countries had raised the Gujarat issue with them. What they opposed was the method through which this had been done. The Government had reservations over the "selective media leaks"

Sources said the Government, for instance, would have no objections in case the foreign governments expressed concern privately and in formal meetings. For instance, the visiting Danish Foreign Minister today discussed the Gujarat situation with the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh. India explained its standpoint on the sit-

uation. Officials here feel that the Gujarat situation has to be understood in the light of the fact that it has been a communally sensitive State. In addition, non-resident Indians who have acquired an influence in the foreign public institutions have also played a role that has led to comments on the Gujarat situation in foreign capitals, they say.

Pak. charge on Brahmos missile rejected

India today rejected the Pakistani assertion that the Brahmos cruise missile it had tested on Sunday violated the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).

Pointing out that the Pakistani allegations were "without any foundation", the External Affairs Ministry spokesperson said the April 28 testing of the Brahmos supersonic missile, an Indo-Russian project, was a "technology demonstration test" carried out from land. "It does not fall within the purview of the MTCR." "The Pakistani statement is, as usual, part of their habitual political propaganda against India," the spokesperson said.

THE HINDU

1 MAY 2002

Delhi gives Pervez a chance

WAITING AND WATCHING



FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, May 28: India today said it will wait for a few more weeks to see if Pakistan is serious about stopping infiltration before announcing its next step, keeping alive hopes for a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

That step could be military action against terrorists based in Pakistan, or a return to the talks table, depending on developments on the ground along the Line of Control.

"If Pakistan acts on the assurance it has given, India will respond," external affairs minister Jaswant Singh said in response to Musharraf's address last night in which he claimed that infiltration was not taking place.

"But these steps have to be irreversible. The camps of the terrorists have to be closed down permanently. If they are serious, we will know. If action is taken by Pakistan, India will reciprocate," he added.

Washington, which has been pressing Musharraf to stop infiltration, also appeared to be giving him a chance to come good on his word.

"We welcome President Musharraf's commitment that Pakistan will not allow its territory to be used for terrorism. This positive statement needs to be coupled with positive actions," PTI quoted a state department official as saying.

Asked if military action is an option India is considering, Singh declined comment. But he said if it does pursue that option, the presence of US soldiers in Pakistan would not be a deterrent.

Listing the series of terrorist attacks in the last one year, Singh said: "We cannot be penalised for our patience and restraint."

He made it clear that India is not buying the argument that Musharraf is not in full control in Pakistan. Many western leaders have been trying to convince Delhi that despite the best inten-

tions of the Pakistani President, rogue elements in the establishment continue to support militants.

"Often this question has been asked whether Musharraf's writ runs in Pakistan," the foreign minister said. "We are of the belief that he is in control of the situation in the country." He argued that Musharraf could not

Siachen firing

New Delhi, May 28: An artillery duel that broke out in the Siachen glacier between Indian and Pakistani troops this afternoon was continuing till early evening even as army sources said shelling across the international boundary in Jammu "was not particularly heavy" today.

Siachen is beyond the LoC, across the Actual Ground Position Line. Sources said that in Batalik in the Kargil sector, too, artillery firing was reported yesterday. On most other parts of the LoC, the exchange of fire was limited to infantry weapons and 81mm and, in a few cases, 120mm mortars.

In the Pallanwala and Rajouri sectors, firing continued last night. Indian troops retaliated with concentrated fire assaults on certain pockets, targeting Pakistani posts.

claim to enjoy the support of 98 per cent of the Pakistani people on one hand and on the other plead that he is not in control.

"I am, therefore, intrigued by these contradictory positions," Singh added.

India's response to Musharraf's speech came this afternoon at a news conference addressed by the foreign minister. Before that, an unofficial meeting attended by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who returned to the capital from Manali around 1.30 pm, and other senior

Cabinet members took place to assess the message the Pakistani President was trying to send.

Describing Musharraf's speech as "disappointing and dangerous", Singh matched the Pakistani President's rhetoric. "It is disappointing, as it merely repeats some earlier assurances which remain unfulfilled till today, and dangerous because through belligerent posturing tension has been added, not reduced."

"Evading altogether the central issue of Pakistan's promotion of terrorism, the general, unfortunately, engaged instead in an offensive and tasteless revilement of India," Singh said.

He termed Musharraf's claim that no infiltration was taking place and the assurance that terrorist activities would not be allowed from Pakistan "mere verbal denials... they run against facts on the ground".

Pakistan expressed "regrets" at India's response to Musharraf's speech.

"Jaswant Singh's allegations against Pakistan are baseless. If India is so concerned about the so-called cross-LoC infiltration, it should accept Pakistan's oft-repeated proposal for strengthening Unmogip (UN monitoring group) or posting of independent observers to monitor the Line of Control," it said.

Singh refused to comment on Musharraf's observations about the treatment of minorities in India, particularly in the context of the violence in Gujarat. He dismissed most of them as either "regrettable" or as a reflection of the "limitation in the general's vocabulary".

He said the world community and Pakistan should instead focus on the central issue of cross-border terrorism. Singh felt that India's diplomatic moves were working, but argued that it was for countries like the US and Britain to assess whether or not the pressure they claim to have applied on Musharraf was yielding results.

■ See Pages 7, 8

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THE TELEGRAPH

MEA to defence of indefensible

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 26. — Ministry of external affairs officials feel they've been placed in a "most unenviable" situation of having to defend the indefensible on Gujarat.

Snowed under an avalanche of questions in Parliament relating to the battering that India's image has taken over Gujarat in the international community, officials were hardpressed to answer questions such as on the number of foreign missions having sent teams to the state. "This is a free country," a senior official said. "How do we check on who has gone and where?"

To top it all, having objected — through public statements — to foreign embassies "leaking" their internal reports to the Indian media and to statements made by visiting foreign dignitaries, the MEA has left itself open to ridicule. "If we don't react, we get hell ... when we do (react), we are laughed at," an official said. "And the worst is that we haven't created the problem ... others create the mess and we are left to clear up." Another senior official summed it up with the words, "We're caught between a rock and a hard place". Mandarins privately admit that months of hard work have gone awry completely with "this mess", and "every Tom, Dick and Harry now lecturing us".

The government has been told to sort out the mess rather than take notice and react to every little bit of criticism, well-meaning or otherwise. But, having been cornered domestically, the government has decided, as a matter of policy, that it would brook no "interference" in its "internal affairs" by lashing out at overt expressions of "concern" and how to manage its affairs.

The BJP today said references made by some missions were baseless and deplorable, taking strong exception to the term "genocide." British foreign secretary Mr Jack Straw spoke to Mr Jaswant Singh to express "regret for the media "leak" of its Gujarat report, which was purely for "internal purposes", an MEA spokesperson said. And EU missions today said they had "merely" conveyed their "concern".

SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 2002 W

NOT A SIGN OF SELF-CONFIDENCE ^W

THE PRIME MINISTER, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the External Affairs Ministry have followed the predictable pattern of the past in protesting over the concerns being expressed by the international community on the vexatious communal situation in Gujarat at this point. At one level, New Delhi's vigorous denunciation of the perceived diplomatic excesses by some European countries has, understandably, remained quite unavailing in the context of the present-day ethos of international interdependence and globalised existence. Now, by transparent means and subtle devices, the European Governments in focus as also some other Western powers and their diplomatic missions in New Delhi have arguably made substantive comments on the fundamental issues at stake in Gujarat at this stage. In essence and taken together, the impugned comments amount to no more than some serious expressions of concern by these countries about the volatile and "tragic" turn of events in Gujarat since the recent Godhra outrage. New Delhi's characterisation of such observations as "foreign interference" in India's internal affairs is reflective of a clear failure on the part of the Government to draw the salutary distinction between a truly objectionable action of external intervention and a plain-speak diplomatic assessment by friendly powers. At another level, New Delhi has completely missed the point that its unseemly sensitiveness is hardly a sign of its own sense of self-assurance in these trying circumstances in Gujarat.

New Delhi has perhaps over-reacted by casting aspersions that some of these Western powers are virtually "creating an impression of playing a partisan role" in Gujarat. Cited in support of this conclusion is the observation by the External Affairs Ministry that "some foreign countries and missions in Delhi are injecting themselves into the highly politically charged internal debate" in India on the current extraordinary crisis in Gujarat. In a critical sense, it is true that India's democratic and secular traditions lie at the core of this internal

debate, howsoever politically charged it might indeed be. It is in this specific context that Mr. Vajpayee has sought to join issue with the Gujarat-conscious vocal sections of the international community. India, according to him, does not need external sermons on its own millennial secularism. The Vajpayee administration seems to think that the present communal polarisation in Gujarat has attracted enormous attention in the West because of its strategic compulsions to prove that its "campaign" against globalised terror has nothing to do with the religious identity of the suspected target-groups. However, the larger issue that India should concern itself with has nothing to do with the sensitivities of the West in its stated "war against terror". As a country that stands for a democratic and pluralist global order of states, India has nothing to be afraid of such transparency as might induce an international scrutiny of even issues concerning its own core principles of nationhood.

New Delhi has overlooked two weighty factors while deploring and denouncing "foreign interference" in Gujarat at this time. First, no evidence has been produced to indicate that the Western powers, some of whom figure in the controversy, have acted in a manner that could instigate further violence and bloodshed in Gujarat and keep the communal cauldron there on the boil. What bears repetition, therefore, is the fine distinction that exists between any intrusive or aggressive action by an external power that might instigate or foment trouble within India and a candid comment. India certainly possesses the strength to withstand the diplomatic sermons from foreign sources. The second key factor of no apparent interest to New Delhi today is a simple question of sustainable diplomacy. If New Delhi cannot tolerate an international plain-speak on human rights and on the basic principles of democracy, tolerance and pluralism, how can India claim a participatory role in the multilateral efforts to shape the global order of the unfolding post-Cold War period?

27 APR 2002

THE HINDU

No sermons, PM tells foreign missions

Stateman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 25. — Completely wrong-footed on the Gujarat issue, the government today said it would brook no "advice" or "sermons" from anyone, least of all foreign missions and visiting dignitaries.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said India has been a pluralistic society for 2,600 years and does not need lessons on secularism or coexistence from others. "India is being preached pluralism and secularism. We need not learn about secularism from others." He seemed peeved at the "concern" voiced by Britain, Canada and some European Union nations on the Gujarat situation.

The foreign ministry has reacted aggressively to overt "concern" and "misutilisation" of the media by foreign governments, twice this past week, clearly indicating that, on this count, the gloves are off. Scheduled to face a parliamentary vote on this issue on Tuesday, the government

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India is being preached pluralism and secularism. We need not learn about secularism from others...
Our foundation is very strong



dia is that you have a tremendous burden of responsibilities on your shoulders and you need to show that you will succeed." Mr Vajpayee reportedly said: "Our foundation is strong. There is no reason why people, who in the present circumstances have deviated, should not come back on the right path." "Sometimes, we stumble as we go ahead but are able to recover. There are ups and downs, but we do not lose sight of our goal... Our foundation is very strong."

Canada justifies stand: A day after Delhi expressed strong disapproval of "foreign interference" in the country's internal affairs, Canada today justified its position on the Gujarat issue, adds PTI from Bangalore. It said it was concerned because it was India's "friend".

Stephane Dion was responding to a query on India's strong objection to observations made by foreign missions on the Gujarat situation.

Editorial: MEA's impotent fuming, page 4

and Canadian minister for inter-governmental affairs Stephane Dion have expressed "concern" over the Gujarat violence at public forums.

Yesterday Mr Dion said: "What is happening in India is so important for the whole humanity. Here we have a secular state which is trying to develop a sense of tolerance... What I'm saying to my counterparts in In-

decided it would at least hit out where it could.

Foreign embassies in New Delhi sent back extremely critical reports of the Gujarat incidents to their headquarters. What has really irked the government is that they leaked selective portions of the reports to the media here. Visiting dignitaries like the Finnish and Swiss foreign ministers

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THE STATESMAN

MEA's impotent fuming

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Only proves that Gujarat is hurting
USA
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In normal times there would be some validity to the ministry of external affairs' taking exception to reports from diplomatic missions here to their governments finding their way to the media. But events in Gujarat have rendered these times abnormal; it is central to the issue that what is happening in Gujarat is of concern worldwide. The MEA's propensity to take offence merely confirms that India's standing in the comity of nations has taken a battering. Cornered like the government at large, the MEA has opted to try and fight its way out but has blundered in suggesting that unfavourable observations are tantamount to interference in India's internal affairs. That line simply does not wash, particularly in this era of globalisation. The international community does not take kindly to blatant violation of human rights: witness Northern Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo, Central Africa and China too. Gujarat may not fit into quite the same bracket but if the Government continue to hide its head in the sand the worst is still to come. The argument that sectarian violence is not confined to the Indian sub-continent falls flat because what worries right-thinking people at home and abroad is the role of the state machinery in furthering the violence unleashed upon the minority community.

The MEA's damage-control strategy of trying to project the "true picture" is as skewed as the Gujarat government's bid — through a series of advertisements in the media — to create an impression of exaggerated media accounts being at the root of the current troubles. What all branches of the central and state governments must realise is that the sordid scenes that horrify the world are not the creation of media/diplomatic reports but are the ground realities. We do not create the crisis, we merely report it. Rather than try to pull the proverbial wool over the eyes, the government must understand that genuine damage-limitation can only take the shape of positive, concrete action. Action that will create conditions in which the process of re-establishing the credibility of the official machinery might be initiated. There is no evidence of that kind of action yet, and until that is done the truth will continue to hurt. Despite all the efforts of the spin doctors of South Block.

MEA tough line on guests

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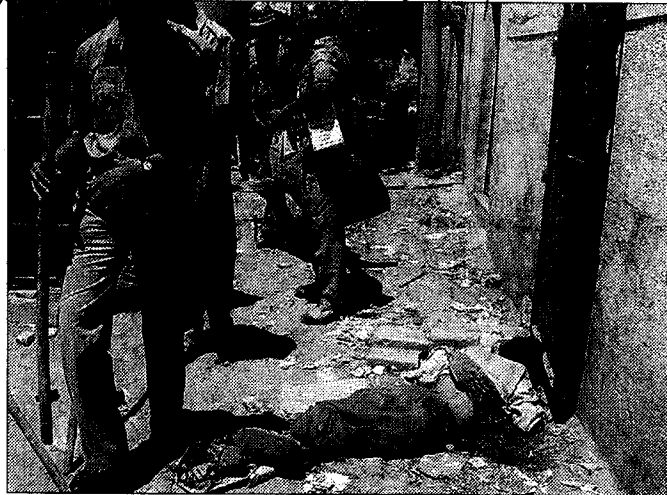
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 24. — Distressed over continuing “deliberate” leaks by some foreign missions of their internal reports on Gujarat, the government today tersely sought an end to political interference in its internal affairs.

The visiting Canadian minister for inter-governmental affairs, Ms Stephane Dion, expressed “concern” over Gujarat at a press meet, while making it clear that the concern should not be interpreted as interference into India’s affairs.

Echoing similar sentiments, the British High Commissioner, Sir Rob Young, also spoke of the continuing violence a cause of concern. He, however, welcomed Mr Vajpayee’s speeches where he said those responsible would be arrested and prosecuted.

These expressions of concern came on top of EU mission’s reports on Gujarat, es-



The body of a man stabbed during Tuesday’s riots in Ahmedabad. —AFP

pecially the way “minorities were targeted”. Noting that “unwarranted” comments were detrimental to ties, a foreign ministry spokesperson said: “We note with regret some foreign missions here continue to inter-

fere in the already democratic debate going on in our country ... on Gujarat by deliberately leaking their internal reports or making political comments on the subject.”

The spokesperson was responding to fresh reports in which the Swiss foreign minister, Mr Josef Deiss, made critical references to the situation in Gujarat. The government, she said, has received no formal communications of disapproval from any country on the matter.

The spokesperson said: “Some foreign countries and missions in Delhi are injecting themselves into the highly politically-charged internal debate and creating an impression of playing a partisan role,” which was “contradictory to norms of diplomacy and injurious to friendly ties between India and the EU as well as the European countries identified in the press reports as source of leaks and political interference.”

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THE STATESMAN

'Partisan role' by some foreign missions deplored

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, APRIL 24. India, for the second time in a week, today expressed its strong disapproval of "foreign interference" in the developments in Gujarat and especially warned the European Union (EU) that its unabated activism in the State can "injure" diplomatic ties.

New Delhi's response came amid media reports in which the visiting Swiss Foreign Minister, Joseph Deiss, said that he had conveyed his country's concern over the "tragic" events in Gujarat to his counterpart, Jaswant Singh, as well as the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee. Official sources said the Government also took strong exception to the "leaked" internal communication on Gujarat between the German and Dutch missions here, with their Governments.

"Foreign interference", however, touched a new high today, with the visiting Canadian Minister of Inter-Governmental Affairs, Stephanie Dion, stating that he was "eager" to participate in a peace march, proposed by the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, in Gujarat. The visiting leader, in fact, urged "all people of goodwill" to "turn up and show how much they want the return of peace in the State." Ironically, Mr. Dion hoped that his expressions of "concern" will not be construed as "interference" in India's internal affairs.

The spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, Nirupama Rao, in a statement, noted that

"some foreign countries and missions in Delhi are injecting themselves into the highly politically charged internal debate in the country and are creating an impression of playing a partisan role." She warned that this was contradictory to well-established norms of diplomacy and "injurious to the friendly relations that exist between India and the EU as well as individual European countries identified in the press as sources of leaks and political interference."

The spokesperson regretted that "some foreign missions in India continue to interfere in the already vigorous debate going on in our country." She added that this intrusion on India's domestic turf was being executed through inspired "leaks" of internal reports or by "substantive political comments on the subject."

The Government was not averse to discussing Gujarat privately. In fact, the situation in the State did come up for discussion between the visiting Australian Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer and Mr. Singh on Tuesday, the sources said. Incidentally, Mr. Downer, in an informal chat with the media, while regretting the violence in Gujarat, expressed optimism about the Government's ability to bring order to the State. Mr. Singh, he said, had informed him that nearly 35,000 arrests had been made. He also rejected what he called the "extravagant" assertions in the media that the rioting in Gujarat was a manifestation of a new form of "apartheid" or was a throwback to Nazi Germany of the 1930s.

Foreign critics back out

Nilova Roy Chaudhury and CL Manoj
in New Delhi

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April 23. — The government's offensive against overt foreign criticism of the Gujarat violence seemed to have paid dividends today. Not only the European Union has backed off from handing the government a demarche, even the Congress has agreed that foreign missions in India have no business to be openly critical about internal affairs.

Diplomatic sources said at least eight EU members have told foreign ministry officials that they would not be part of any official censure, which a demarche would amount to. In fact, some countries told India they would issue formal denials if such an issue came up.

While it is true that the 15-member EU sought an independent assessment of the situation in Gujarat and reported back to their governments, as indeed "any diplomatic mission would routinely be required to do," they did not anticipate the viru-

lence of the MEA's reaction to public airing of essentially secret reports between embassies and their governments.

The Congress, much to the government's surprise, virtually sang the same tune as yesterday's MEA statement. The party spokesman, Mr Jaipal Reddy, said: "In our view, there is no need for international bodies to get exercised over the human rights situation in Gujarat... In India, we have a vibrant democracy, independent judiciary, vigilant media and a powerful Parliament to make the executive accountable."

He said Indian institutions are capable of taking care of the aberrations in any part of the Indian system and that the reaction of the people and Parliament to the incidents were the testimony of the institutions.

Sources said the Congress reaction reflects the party's worries about the government and Sangh Parivar, as a tactical ploy, trying to make a case of "intervention by foreign countries in Indian internal matters".

THE STATESMAN

Delhi rejects 'foreign interference'

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, APRIL 22. Signalling a rejection of foreign interference in Gujarat, India today took strong exception to the remarks by the Finnish Foreign Minister on the communal strife in the State.

The Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson, Nirupama Rao, in response to a question on the Finnish Foreign Minister's interview to an English daily — said that India "does not appreciate" foreign interference in its internal affairs.

"India does not appreciate interference... including utilisation of the Indian media by foreign leaders as well as by visiting dignitaries to make public statements in order to pander to their domestic lobbies," she said.

Sources here said the spokesperson's remarks should not be seen as "Finland-specific", but as reflecting India's "generic" response to all foreign governments on this subject. She declined to comment

when asked to respond to a media report that a hard-hitting statement from the European Union was in the offing.

"We have seen only press reports and further details are being ascertained. We do not wish to react at this stage." According to the report, the E.U., in its forthcoming declaration, has compared the developments in Gujarat to "apartheid".

Significantly, the E.U. this evening delinked itself from the contents of this story. "The remarks contained in an article... are the sole responsibility of its author," a communique from the Presidency of the European Union said.

The statement, however, pointed out that the EU followed the events in Gujarat "with attention" and had expressed its "concern".

Sources made three points about the international response to the Gujarat happenings. First, India would remain attentive to any expressions of concern by foreign govern-

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ments and their leaders on the developments, provided they were privately expressed. But New Delhi would reject observations that were publicly aired and appeared to placate the demands of the domestic constituencies in these countries.

Second, India would impress upon foreign governments that it was perfectly capable of handling on its own, the fallout of the complex situation in Gujarat. Third, the developments in the State should not bring into question India's credentials of a secular and pluralistic democracy. Sources said that the "system" was capable of handling the international fallout. The continuation of rioting in the State, however, could pose serious difficulties to India's interests abroad. The Government, the sources said, was especially concerned that if the violence was not contained, concerns could find an echo in Saudi Arabia and Iran — the key leaders of the Islamic world with whom India has deep linkages.

Don't meddle in Gujarat, world told

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HT Correspondent & PTI
New Delhi, April 22

INDIA TODAY reacted sharply to criticism of the Gujarat situation by foreign leaders and visiting dignitaries, asking them not to interfere in its internal affairs. The European Union has meanwhile distanced itself from an alleged report on the developments in the State.

"We would like to make clear that India does not appreciate interference in our internal affairs including utilisation of the Indian media by foreign leaders as well as by visiting dignitaries to make public statements in order to pander to their domestic lobbies," External Affairs ministry spokesperson Nirupama Rao told reporters.

New Delhi's sharp response came following an interview to an Indian English daily given by visiting Finland's Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja where he said that the happenings in Gujarat were a matter of great concern and that the "pictures of carnage are very disturbing". He enjoined the official European Union view and disclosed that he had personally asked External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh about it.

India has lodged an official protest with Finland on the issue, Rao said.

Meanwhile, the Embassy of Spain, the acting President of EU, said the media report which said that the EU had in a declaration observed that the carnage in Gujarat was kind of apartheid and has parallels with Nazi Germany of the 1930s was the "sole responsibility of its author".

In a release, it said "the EU follows with attention the events in Gujarat and has expressed its concern in this

respect".

Britain has tactfully avoided confirming reports based on a leak of its telegram on Gujarat meant for its foreign office in London. Sources said the Tony Blair Government had used the leak to placate its Asian-origin constituents of its interest in the welfare of people of a particular community.

India's reaction also comes close on the heels of remarks by US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca who, on a visit here last week, termed the events in Gujarat as "horrible".

New Delhi plans to lodge official complaints with the governments of other countries too whose missions here have been leaking to the local Press selective contents of their diplomatic telegrams on the Gujarat riots.

"While diplomats of foreign missions are free to write their reports based on their impressions, the practice of leaking is not acceptable," the MEA spokesperson said.

The Vajpayee government has been stung by international criticism for its handling of the Gujarat problem. It has instructed the Ministry of External Affairs to keep daily contact with the Gujarat Government so that its point of view gets better representation in the international media.

A source in a West Asian Embassy disclosed that Saudi Arabia and the UAE would shortly be coming out with public statements on the Gujarat problem.

However, the missions of the two countries have been instructed to maintain media silence. "The attention of leading Islamic nations is for the time being consumed by the problems in Palestine," an official said.

Riots put India in bad light (h-11)

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: India's growing discomfort with the international community's comments on Gujarat surfaced on Tuesday with the South Block calling in the British deputy high commissioner. The British High Commission has prepared an internal report on Gujarat which challenges the India government's version on several counts.

While no details were available officially, sources said India had put on record its disagreement with the facts contained in the report.

In response to a question on the international reaction to Gujarat, an external affairs ministry spokesperson said, "All the countries are well aware of the steps the government of India has taken. We have the capacity and the will to deal with incidents of this nature. Our secular credentials are in no way diluted."

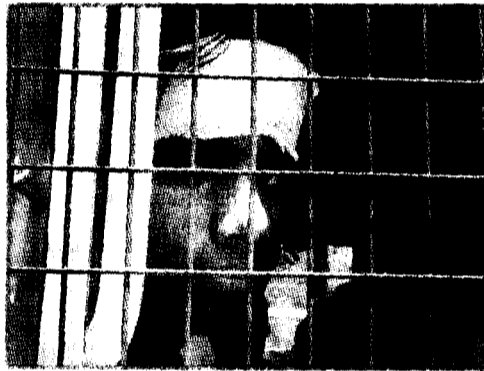
The clarifications have become necessary following the remarks

made by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in his speech in Goa. Mr Vajpayee had said, "Wherever there are Muslims, they do not want to live with others. Instead of living peacefully, they want to preach and propagate their

the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) was forced, subsequently, to 'clarify' that Mr Vajpayee was not attacking the entire Muslim community but only the 'jehadi' elements.

This clarification was referred by U.S. State Department spokesperson Phil Reeker in a briefing on Monday. When asked about Mr Vajpayee's comments, Mr Reeker said he understood that the PMO had clarified that the remarks had been taken out of context. Mr Reeker said the U.S. position on the violence in Gujarat was clear and that U.S. assistant secretary of state for South Asia Christina Rocca had talked about it during her visit.

Saying that India had long prided itself on being a multi-ethnic secular nation, Mr Reeker said it was very important that parties sought peaceful resolution to their differences, because this type of violence did not benefit anybody and it simply resulted in the loss of innocent lives.



religion by creating fear and terror in the minds of others." These remarks and others, where he appeared to justify the communal riots in Gujarat by claiming they were a reaction to the Godhra carnage, had been so controversial that

Parties welcome Centre's move

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 10. Across the political spectrum, parties welcomed the first step taken by the Government to ease the India-Pakistan standoff that has built up over the last six months, specifically since the terrorist attack on Parliament last December 13.

Today was one of those rare days when both the Bharatiya Janata Party and the CPI (M) welcomed the Government de-

cision and almost spoke in one voice. "The Government has taken the step of once again allowing overflight by Pakistani aircraft after considering all aspects of the ground situation. It is, of course, good if this helps to disperse the war clouds that had gathered on the horizon. It is always preferable to resolve problems peacefully rather than wage a war. We welcome this step towards de-escalation of tensions," the BJP senior leader and former party president,

Kushabhau Thakre, said. He hoped that the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, "delivers on his commitment to end cross-border terrorism."

The CPI (M) politburo member, Sitaram Yechury, expressed happiness at the Government's move. However, he hoped that the step was based on the Government's own reports and assessment of the situation "and not under American pressure." The CPI leader, Shamim Faizi, said "any attempt to restore

normality in India-Pakistan relations is welcome."

Although no formal reaction to this development was available from the Congress, the party had been emphasising the need to explore all diplomatic channels and find a peaceful solution to the problem without compromising national interests. Informally, some party leaders said that the first step towards de-escalation of tension between the two neighbours was welcome.

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SUBSTANTIVE DECLINE SEEN IN INFILTRATION

Musharraf's pledge 'a step forward', says Jaswant

By C. Raja Mohan

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NEW DELHI, JUNE 8. India today welcomed the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's pledge to the United States on ending permanently the infiltration across the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, and reaffirmed its commitment to respond positively in the coming days.

The External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, today told the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, in a telephone conversation that Gen. Musharraf's pledge is a "step forward and in the right direction."

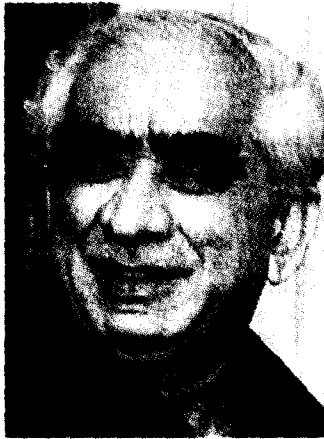
Pakistan's promise on cross-border infiltration to the U.S. on Thursday was conveyed to New Delhi by the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, yesterday and publicised in Washington by the Bush administration.

In an official statement on the Jaswant-Powell conversation, the Ministry of External Affairs said the implementation of Gen. Musharraf's pledge "will be carefully assessed, whereafter... India will respond appropriately and positively." The statement is being seen here as a "marker" that is being put down by the Government to reflect its "new receptivity" to Gen. Musharraf's moves.

India's promise to respond seems tied to an assessment of the situation on the ground. Although a formal assessment is expected to take place next week, the first reviews in the Government indicate a substantive and an unambiguous decline in cross-border infiltration in the two weeks since the speech by

Gen. Musharraf.

The Government is apparently in the middle of a debate on defining the nature and timing of its response to the visible decline in cross-border infiltration, which has also been acknowledged by



the international community. While the sceptics point to the pitfalls of giving "too much, too early," others suggest that giving "too little, too late" could result in a loss of momentum that is building behind the current international efforts to defuse the tension in the subcontinent.

The willingness of Gen. Musharraf to put an end to cross-border terrorism under international pressure is being viewed here as "a significant victory" for the coercive diplomacy pursued by India since the December 13 attack on Parliament.

The largest Indian military mobilisation since Independence has succeeded in extracting pledges from Gen. Musharraf on cross-border terrorism without actual use of force, and avoiding the tremendous bloodshed that will result from a nuclear conflict.

In defining its response to the latest turn of events, Indian diplomacy appears to have entered a "complex, testing end-game." The unfolding game of chess is about reversing more than a decade-old sponsorship of terrorism by Pakistan in Kashmir. Analysts here say that Gen. Musharraf's pledge to end cross-border infiltration is to the President of United States and the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and the full weight of the Anglo-American powers is now behind it.

New Delhi's response, they add, must be designed to address the current intense

international effort to avert a nuclear war in the subcontinent. It is expected to make up its mind before the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, arrives here next week.

A quick goodwill gesture, diplomatic sources here say, would help lock Gen. Musharraf in a process that could lead, step by step, towards a de-escalation of military tensions as well as an end to cross-border violence.

Highly-placed Government sources here say "India will decide on the reciprocal steps and calibrate them according to our own judgment."

These steps need to be executed with some "arithmetical precision," they suggest.

The Government is apparently considering a "menu of options" in responding to Gen. Musharraf. These could include diplomatic and military actions that could ease the standoff between India and Pakistan.

New Delhi's ability to take early diplomatic steps appears to have been constrained by the brutal treatment meted out to the staffer at the Indian High Commission, Kulwant Singh, recently.

Analysts here say that the best moves India could make at this stage would be those signalling its commitment to peace in the region, that are capable of being reversed if India arrives at an assessment that Gen. Musharraf is not living up to his pledge.

And that a move to pull back some of the warships that India had massed recently in the Arabian Sea would perfectly fit the bill

'Tensions are down'

TALLINN, ESTONIA, JUNE 8. The United States Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, today said that "tensions were down measurably" between the nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan, but the crisis over Kashmir was not yet over.

"When you have close to a million men glaring, shouting, and occasionally shooting across a territory that is a matter of some dispute, then I think you couldn't say the crisis is over, but I think you can say that the tensions are down measurably," Mr. Armitage told reporters here.

— Reuters

09 JUN 2009

THE HINDU

'NO SCOPE FOR MEDIATION ON KASHMIR'

India rejects proposal for international patrol

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, JUNE 6. Joint patrolling by India and Pakistan along the Line of Control in Kashmir is feasible, and can be "worked out" if Pakistan agrees to the proposal, the National Security Adviser, Brajesh Mishra, has said. "If Pakistan accepts this proposal in principle, then modalities to implement it can be worked out," Mr. Mishra told presspersons here today.

India, however, would not welcome foreign participation in the patrolling of the LoC. "The terrain in Jammu and Kashmir is so difficult that only Indians and Pakistanis know it

inch by inch. It would be more appropriate and productive to have India and Pakistan monitor whether infiltration has ended or not." Elaborating, he said "it is much more difficult than in Afghanistan, where with all Western technological achievements, many mistakes were committed." Inexperienced international patrol could result in civilian casualties.

Mr. Mishra's comments came amid reports that the United States was going to propose a joint U.S.-British military monitoring force on the India-Pakistan border in an attempt to defuse the threat of war be-

tween the neighbours. Quoting defence and diplomatic sources, *The Independent* said the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, would put forward the proposal for a "verification force" during his visit to the subcontinent.

Earlier, Mr. Mishra had a 10-minute meeting with the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, and the Defence Minister, Sergei Ivanov, on the sidelines of the celebrations to mark the 10th anniversary of the Russian Security Council, and discussed the Indo-Pakistan standoff. "Mr. Putin expressed Russia's understanding of the situation between India and Pakistan,"

he said, "Russia's position is as follows: put an end to cross-border terrorism and thereby avoid a military conflict."

India "appreciated" Russia's stand on the situation in South Asia and welcomed the international efforts to make Pakistan stop cross-border terrorism and avert a military conflict, Mr. Mishra said. However, he ruled out any international role in resolving the Kashmir issue. "There is no question of any mediation in this and other problems between India and Pakistan... These problems must be settled directly by the two countries through a bilateral dialogue, a framework for which has been provided by the Shimla agreement and the Lahore declaration."

Underscoring that the term "mediation" was not taboo while talking about the Indo-Pak. standoff, Mr. Mishra appreciated Mr. Putin's "mediation" in avoiding a military conflict between the two countries.

"Russia, like the United States, the United Kingdom, China and many countries, is engaged in efforts to avoid an Indo-Pak. military conflict.

If these efforts succeed in ending cross-border terrorism and avoid a military conflict, it would be great."

U.S., Russia to help defuse crisis

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, JUNE 6. Russia and the United States will work together to defuse the India-Pakistan crisis, the Kremlin has said. In a telephonic conversation on Thursday, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, and the U.S. President, George W. Bush, "confirmed their shared stand on the settlement of the Indo-Pakistani conflict and their resolve to continue coordinated efforts to avoid escalation of the conflict and to normalise relations between India and Pakistan," the Interfax news agency quoted the Kremlin press service as saying. Mr. Putin briefed Mr. Bush on his talks in

Almaty with the leaders of India and Pakistan, the press service said.

Meanwhile, there are indications that Russia may not object to India's military operation against terrorist bases across the Line of Control if infiltrations from Pakistan continue, and a consensus can be built among the major world powers on the issue. And whether the military option in the relations between India and Pakistan is exercised will depend on "how far Islamabad is able to control the situation at home," the Russian Defence Minister, Sergei Ivanov, in Brussels for the first Russia-NATO council meeting, was quoted by the RIA Novosti news agency as saying.

07 JUN 2002

THE HINDU

Terrorism on top of Almaty agenda

Hot and cold on Kashmir for Delhi

FROM SEEMA GUHA

New Delhi, June 3: India is pleased with the findings of the MORI survey that indicated a preference among the people of Kashmir to seek a solution to the problem of militancy through the democratic process of elections.

The Vajpayee government believes the results of the survey broadly echo its own assessment of the mood. But there is a flip side to it. Kashmir is growing bigger on the international radar and the rest of the world is getting seriously concerned about finding a solution to this dispute, which has the potential of turning into a nuclear flashpoint.

India's long-standing policy of keeping the outside world away from Kashmir could soon be a thing of the past as the US and other powers work towards ensuring peace in South Asia. Overseas Kashmiri groups, which operate from both the US and the UK, are keen to exploit the current focus on the subcontinent and Kashmir to extract some concessions for the long-suffering people of the state.

Lord Eric Reginald Avebury, closely associated with the Kashmiri cause, has said he would want both the US and Britain to take a careful look at the MORI survey, which he had commissioned. He believes India and Pakistan should be pushed into extending more concessions to the people of Kashmir.

India believes Kashmiris are tired of the nearly two-decade-old civil strife. It also knows unless some degree of autonomy is granted, it will not be possible to win the people of the Valley. The MORI survey clearly indicated that Kashmiris were keen on more autonomy for Kashmir from both India and Pakistan.

During his recent visit to Kashmir, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee himself reopened the autonomy debate by saying the government was willing to talk to all sections of political opinion on the issue.

But autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir does not go with the ruling BJP's views that no state should be singled out for special treatment.

Lord Avebury hoped US secretary of defence Donald Rumsfeld and deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage, scheduled to visit India and Pakistan, would carefully consider the contents of the MORI survey.

US secretary of state Colin Powell has said his government's first priority is to take a step-by-step approach to end the current standoff between India and Pakistan.

Once this is achieved and infiltration is stopped, India and Pakistan can be made to take action on Kashmir and resolve their other differences.

Perhaps without intending, New Delhi's international campaign against President Gen. Pervez Musharraf might eventually result in more meddling by the US and others nations in India's Kashmir policy.

Guerilla killed

Indian border guards today shot dead a guerilla commander belonging to a banned Pakistan-based rebel group in a gunbattle in Kashmir, the Border Security Force said.

The BSF said in a statement its troops laid siege to Panju, a remote hamlet in Pulwama district in Srinagar.



Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee being welcomed by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in Almaty. (AFP)

India toehold in Central Asia

FROM BHARAT BHUSHAN

Almaty, June 3: India has managed to push combating terrorism as a high-profile issue on the agenda of the Conference and Interactions on Confidence Building Measures in Central Asia by announcing the setting up of a joint working group on terrorism with Kazakhstan on the eve of the conference.

The summit, hosted by Kazakhstan, is also expected to adopt a declaration on curbing terrorism tomorrow. And Pakistan as a member of the conference is expected to sign the declaration and adhere to it.

New Delhi's bid to acquire increased political and economic leverage in Central Asia also received a boost today with Kazakhstan encouraging it to make direct investment in its oil and gas sector and to upgrade economic co-operation in other areas. Given its vast reserves, Kazakhstan has the potential of emerging as an alternative to the Gulf region for India's crude oil needs.

India's increased political leverage in the region is likely to be the result of a two-pronged strategy being followed by it. At one level, New Delhi is emphasising the commonality of global and regional perspectives between it and the largely secular Central Asian Republics — especially in relation to the present tensions in South Asia and in combating terrorism as well as religious extremism.

Simultaneously, it is strengthening economic links with the region.

It was to emphasise their shared political perspective that Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and President Nursultan Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan today announced the setting up of a joint working group for co-operation on terrorism.

This is expected to allow intelligence-sharing on terrorism, religious extremism and drug trafficking.

President Nazarbaev in fact declared that he supported India's stand on cross-border terrorism, all other kinds of extremism and drug-trafficking. This development formalises the commitment of the two nations

to combat terrorism.

However, it is also aimed at giving a higher profile to the issue of terrorism at the summit tomorrow when a resolution condemning the menace would be adopted. Pakistan signing the declaration would then be one more way of binding it to a commitment to stop sponsoring terrorist activities.

India knows that it cannot establish a strong presence in Central Asia unless it forges economic links with the region. Last year, India invested \$1.7 billion in Russia's Sakhalin oil fields and is looking for similar investment in oil and gas fields in Kazakhstan.

The proven oil reserves of Kazakhstan stand at seven billion tonnes (20 billion tonnes of predicted estimates) at present and its gas reserves are estimated to be three to six trillion cubic metres.

US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld will leave on Tuesday for a trip that will include visits to India and Pakistan, Europe for Nato meetings and the Gulf, US defence officials said today.

Rumsfeld is to start his trip in Europe with the first stop in London, followed by a stop in Brussels for Nato meetings. The dates of his visit to India and Pakistan had not yet been set, officials said.

At the bilateral meetings between the two countries today, therefore, India showed keen interest in investing and becoming a part of the Kazakh-Russian consortium exploring the Kurmangazi oil block in the Caspian Sea basin as well as in the Darkhan oil exploration block.

India also wants to invest in the two Kazakh gas fields at Alibekmola and Kozhasai.

The investments are sought to be made through ONGC Videsh and the signs are that they would come through.

The investment in the Kazakh oil sector would provide India, the fourth largest consumer of oil in the world, one more source of supply to meet its ever increasing energy needs.

Musharraf presses for talks

FROM SEBASTIAN ALISON

Almaty, June 3 (Reuters): Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf offered today to hold "unconditional" talks with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to resolve the tense military standoff between the two nuclear-armed rivals.

Musharraf also welcomed moves by Russian President Vladimir Putin to mediate between the two countries.

Musharraf said he has proposed meeting Vajpayee several times without success. They last exchanged a cold handshake and a few words in Nepal in January. Asked at today's news briefing under what conditions he would be willing to talk to Vajpayee, the Pakistani military ruler replied: "Unconditional. You need to ask that question to Prime Minister Vajpayee. I have no conditions."

Putin hopes to bring them together to end a confrontation the international community fears could set off a nuclear war, and Musharraf was extremely positive about his potential role.



Pervez Musharraf in Almaty. (Reuters)

"Yes, surely I will meet him (Putin)," he said.

"I am extremely privileged that he has asked me to meet him. I would like to contribute my utmost to his efforts to reduce tensions."

As the US, Britain and other Western nations evacuated

diplomats and their families from India and Pakistan, Musharraf told CNN: "I would even go to the extent of saying one shouldn't even be discussing these things (nuclear war), because any sane individual cannot even think of going into this unconventional war."

In an apparent rebuke to Pakistan, Russia today said infiltration of terrorists into India was continuing unabated and Islamabad's recent test-firing of nuclear capable missiles was a "provocative" gesture, PTI adds from Moscow.

"Infiltration of armed terrorists and extremists into India is continuing from the Pakistani territories, and this fact cannot be ignored," defence minister Sergei Ivanov said.

The recent test-firing of nuclear-capable missiles by Pakistan had escalated tension in the region, Ivanov added.

"Any nuclear weapon tests conducted in an atmosphere of extreme tension and suspicion is wrong and provocative," he said. "This will push New Delhi to making proportionate retaliatory measures."

In the Ukrainian capital Kiev, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan told a news conference: "I hope the opportunity that the meeting in Almaty has offered will be used wisely and that the discussions will take us away from the brink."

Pervez plays up to India's friend

Delhi sidesteps Pak Putin trap

FROM BHARAT BHUSHAN

Almaty, June 3: A bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and President Pervez Musharraf tomorrow will be "unproductive", national security adviser Brajesh Mishra said today. He, therefore, ruled out any contact with Pakistan at any level in Almaty.

This was in sharp contrast to Musharraf placing high hopes on Russian President Vladimir Putin playing a role in diminishing military tensions. He told reporters this evening that Putin was "a very important personality of the world and a very dynamic and forward-looking leader. And Russia has always been very close to India. Therefore, I think, he has an important position and a role to play in mediating between India and Pakistan."

India does not think so. Mishra explained the Indian position, saying: "We have come to Almaty for an international conference and we have invested a lot of effort to make it a success. It would be unfortunate to draw attention away from the conference to an unproductive bilateral meeting."

Second, he said, the Indian position was that it wanted to see whether the promises made by Pakistan were implemented. And third, India's clear understanding was that Putin was not suggesting a trilateral meeting between Russia, India and Pakistan. He had only suggested separate bilateral meetings with India and Pakistan. While South

NO EYE CONTACT



Vajpayee, Musharraf at Almaty. (PTI, Reuters)

Asia was no doubt expected to figure in the Vajpayee-Putin talks tomorrow, Mishra said his expectation was that the major emphasis would be on bilateral issues.

Moscow is keen on engaging Pakistan, and Islamabad in recent times has seen visits by a string of Russian delegations. Now that Afghanistan is moving towards stabilisation, Russia is seeking to build bridges with Pakistan and get an economic foothold in infrastructure development in that country. However, it is doubtful whether it has any leverage with Pakistan as of now.

But this does not prevent Pakistan from hoping that Putin could contribute to a de-escalation of tension because of Russia's influence on India. Pak-

istan's minister for information Nisar Memon told reporters this evening that Russia was a good friend not only of India but also of Pakistan. He hoped that the 'Putin initiative' would help reduce the tension.

What seems apparent is that while the public statements of Pakistan and India on the need to de-escalate the tension show a remarkable convergence — with both talking of deeds being more important than words in avoiding war — there seems to be a complete divergence on the modalities of doing so.

It is clear that both countries want to avoid war. Both also want to test each other's sincerity by action rather than by words. India wants to wait to ascertain whether Pakistan is delivering on its promise of curbing infiltration. And Pakistan's position is that if India does not want war, it should prove so by starting a dialogue with it.

India's stand was explained by Vajpayee to three dignitaries in bilateral talks today — Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, Tajik President Emomali Rakhmanov and the chairman of the interim administration in Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai.

Mishra said the Prime Minister told them that Musharraf had made some promises on curbing infiltration and terrorism, which had also been conveyed to India by the US and the UK. He apparently told them that "if these promises are implemented and we can verify them, we will take appropriate steps".

The emphasis, Mishra added, was on implementation.

■ See Page 6

QUOTE

It would be unfortunate to draw attention to an unproductive bilateral meeting

BRAJESH MISHRA

'PUTIN NOT MEDIATING BETWEEN INDIA AND PAK.'

Appropriate steps if Pak. keeps its word: Brajesh

By Atul Aneja

ALMATY (KAZAKHSTAN), JUNE 3. With international pressure mounting, India and Pakistan may be beginning to narrow the gap in their perceptions of ways to lower their border tensions. India today reiterated that it was willing to take "appropriate steps" in case the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, implemented some of the promises he had made to the United States and the United Kingdom on countering terrorism.

Addressing a press conference this evening, the National Security Adviser and Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Brajesh Mishra, said that if "these (promises) are implemented, then we can take appropriate steps."

Government sources pointed out that India's focus was on the seriousness of Pakistan's intentions on countering cross border terrorism. In case Pakistan's desire to curb infiltrations "permanently" was genuine, India would reciprocate meaningfully. According to Mr. Mishra, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, conveyed these views to the Afghan interim President, Hamid Karzai, and Tajikistan's President, Emomaly Rakhmonov, whom he met this evening. Both leaders were here to

attend the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia that begins on Tuesday. Significantly, the Pakistan Information Minister, Nissar Memon, who is accompanying



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Kazakhstan President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, watch the Minister of State for External Affairs, Omar Abdullah, and the Kazak Defence Minister, Mukhtar Altynvaev, signing an MoU on military and technical cooperation in Almaty on Monday. — PTI

Gen. Musharraf, said at a press conference here that Pakistan was focussing on "deeds not words." He pointed out that Pakistan would not allow its territory to be used for terrorism against any country "including India." Mr. Memon added that the Pakistani President had taken steps to detain terrorists after his January 12 address. The effort to "hunt down" terrorists would persist.

Reiterating India's approach during the Prime Minister's stay in Almaty, Mr. Mishra ruled out talks between Mr. Vajpayee and Gen. Musharraf. Nor was there any plan for members of the Indian delegation to meet the official delegates accompanying Gen. Musharraf. Ruling out "unproductive talks" at this time, Mr. Mishra said India would like to "wait and see and verify what has been promised first."

Mr. Mishra also clarified that the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, was not mediating between India and Pakistan and reiterated that he was holding separate meetings with Mr. Vajpayee and Gen. Musharraf on Tuesday. Russia was fully acquainted with India's standpoint and it was likely that Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Putin would discuss other "bilateral matters" as well.

Asia

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FLURRY OF DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY IN DELHI

There is national anger, Vajpayee tells Blair

By Atul Aneja & Sandeep Dikshit

NEW DELHI, MAY 27. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, spoke tonight to the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, as part of the ongoing Anglo-American diplomatic initiative to defuse military tensions between India and Pakistan.

(A PTI report from Manali said that Mr. Vajpayee firmly told Mr. Blair that India's patience was running out as Pakistan had failed to keep its promise of curbing cross-border terrorism. "There is a national anger" because the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, had not translated into reality the promises he made in his January 12 speech to stop cross-border terrorism. "This time we would expect any promises made by him to be translated into action and this should be verifiable on the

doing so, is going beyond engaging the United States and Britain. For instance, it is reaching out to its "time-tested" friend, Russia, as also Israel. Not surprisingly, New Delhi and Tel Aviv are beginning a crucial day-long session on counter-terrorism on Tuesday.

During the Kargil war, Israel had supplied sensitive surveillance equipment to India, including its unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). India subsequently has shown interest in acquiring the latest UAVs developed by Israel.

The political bonding between the two is partly governed by the possibility of mass destruction weaponry proliferating from Pakistan to its periphery in West Asia, from where Israel could be targeted.

Russia, which has been constantly informed about the Indian perception in its stand-off with Pakistan, recently committed itself to providing "all possible help" to enable India to address "any eventuality" that it might encounter in the near future, sources said.

Though assured of the Russian support, a meeting between Mr. Vajpayee and the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, on the sidelines of the CICA conference in Kazakhstan's commercial capital, Almaty, in early June has already been sought.

The Almaty conclave is unlikely to see a Russia-brokered thaw in the India-Pakistan relationship.

India, on the contrary, may already be looking at contin-

gency plans, including sounding Russia on diplomatic assistance, in case hostilities with Pakistan break out, analysts say.

Meanwhile, the British High Commissioner, Rob Young, met the National Security Adviser, Brajesh Mishra, as did the U.S. Ambassador to India, Robert Blackwill.

Mr. Mishra held "frank" discussions with the two envoys. Mr. Blackwill also met the Home Minister, L. K. Advani, during the day.

Heavy Pak. firing in Dras sector

PTI reports:

For the first time after the Kargil conflict, Pakistani forces today opened heavy fire on Dras town on the crucial Srinagar-Leh highway.

Army officials here said 240 Pakistani soldiers had been killed and 75 bunkers destroyed in retaliatory fire over the past 10 days.

In the past two days it had also begun heavy firing in Siachen, Kargil and in the upper areas of northern Kashmir such as Uri and Kupwara.

Indian forces, in response, had inflicted heavy casualties on Pakistani forces with 70 killed or wounded and 75 bunkers in Akhnoor, Poonch, Nowshera and Rajouri sectors destroyed.

Officials said that as the Pakistani forces had moved right up to the Line of Control in Poonch, Uri and Kupwara areas, thousands of villagers on the PoK side had moved out of their villages.

PM returning today

By Kanwar Yogendra

MANALI, MAY 27. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, is returning to New Delhi tomorrow, cutting short his visit.

Mr. Vajpayee, who stayed indoors, cleared a number of files which were brought here by an air force chopper.

According to sources, he talked over telephone to his Cabinet colleagues, especially the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, and the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, in the wake of the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's statement on entering Indian territory and Islamabad's missile tests.

ground," he was quoted as telling Mr. Blair during their 15-minute telephone conversation. Mr. Blair expressed sympathy for those killed in the May 14 terrorist attack in Kaluchak in Jammu and Kashmir).

With two days to go for the visit of the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, India has begun giving final shape to its diplomatic and military posture to put a permanent end to cross-border terrorism.

According to highly-placed Government sources, India, in

India's response today

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, MAY 27. While keeping a detailed reaction on hold, India today said that its response to the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's televised address tonight will be shaped by the "totality" of his statements and observations since January 12.

According to the spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, Nirupama Rao, the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, India will respond comprehensively to the General's address on Tuesday afternoon.

India, while defining its response will also include Gen. Musharraf's recent interview to the *Washington Post*.

In response to a question, the spokesperson said India would seek to "verify" Gen. Musharraf's words with concrete action on the ground.

Asked to comment on the General's observations on support to Kashmir, the spokesperson said Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India.

28 MAY 2019

It's imported ability: MEA

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Statesman News Service & PTI

NEW DELHI, May 26. — As the government worked on further diplomatic offensive it could launch to add pressure on Pakistan while tying up military details, it remained unimpressed by Pakistan's continuing missile tests.

It said the tests demonstrated "clearly the actual mindset of the Pakistani leadership."

"We have already said earlier that we are not impressed by these missile antics, particularly when all that is demonstrated is borrowed or imported ability," the external affairs ministry spokesperson said, responding to the *Hatf-III (Ghaznavi)* surface-to-surface short-range missile test carried out by Pakistan today.

"The technology used in the missiles is not their own but clandestinely acquired from other countries, a fact that has been unearthed by India and extensively documented in research findings by well-established research institutions and laboratories all over the world," the spokesperson said.

India termed as "provocative" President Pervez Musharraf's statement warning that his forces would move into Indian territory should a war break out.

"It is yet another indication of Pakistan refusing to see the writing on the wall or to understand where the need for action lies. Action is required from Pakistan on stopping cross-border terrorism, dealing with

(Continued from page 1)

infiltration and activities of terrorist groups," the spokesperson said. She was responding to questions on General Musharraf's interview to *The Washington Post* in which he said "... should war erupt ... we will take the offensive into Indian territory."

Meanwhile, as a Pakistani delegation prepares to travel for New Delhi for the annual Indus water treaty talks on May 29, Pakistan termed as "irresponsible" the threat by Indian Water Resources Minister to scrap the treaty, agency reports from Islamabad said.

"At a time when focus ought to be on defusing tensions between the two countries, such hostile rhetoric is highly regrettable," foreign office spokesman Mr Aziz Ahmed Khan said, reacting to Mrs Bijoya Chakravorty's reported statement that India was seriously considering scrapping the treaty. The J&K government has strongly advocated scrapping of the treaty.

Among other options before the Indian

MEA:

government is a proposal to further scale down the size of the diplomatic missions to around a dozen officials. (from the present 44) or even to close down the missions and cut off diplomatic ties completely.

But, according to officials, a problem with the latter option is that the country that breaks off ties has to call for ties to be resumed when relations return to a semblance of normalcy. With the outbreak of hostilities in 1971, both countries simultaneously pulled out their staff, under neutral Swiss supervision, allowing for both to resume ties in 1976.

Asked whether Pakistan's tests were a violation of the missile non-proliferation regime, the foreign office spokesperson said "the actions of Pakistan fit into the international community's nightmarish scenario of state-sponsored terrorist activities armed with ballistic missile technology and nuclear weaponry".

Whether these tests could invite international sanctions under the MTCR (missile technology control regime) was also being explored.

THE STATESMAN

27 MAY 1999

Step up diplomatic pressure: India

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, MAY 26. With a fresh round of Anglo-American diplomacy to defuse military tensions between India and Pakistan set to unroll, New Delhi today sought to impress upon the world community to intensify its diplomatic pressure on Islamabad.

Taking exception to the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's remarks in an interview to *Washington Post*, where he warned that Pakistani forces would move into Indian territory, in case of a war, the External affairs Ministry spokesperson, Nirupama Rao, said the international community should take clear notice of the Pakistani leadership's "actual mindset."

"There is very real necessity for the international community to clearly understand the actual mindset of the Pakistani leadership."

India's reaction to Gen. Musharraf's remarks assumes importance in the light of the

British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw's visit to India and Pakistan in the coming week. This will be followed by the visit of the United States Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, on June 6. Gen. Musharraf's assertion was "yet another indication of Pakistan refusing to see the writing on the wall or to understand where the need for action lies. Action is required from Pakistan on stopping cross-border terrorism, dealing with infiltration and activities of terrorist groups," the spokesperson stressed.

While reiterating that the Pakistani missile tests, including that of the short-range Ghaznavi that was fired today, were directed at a domestic audience, she sought to draw a link between Islamabad's acquiring missiles to its possible involvement in proliferating them for terrorism in the future. "The actions of Pakistan fit into the international community's nightmarish scenario of state-sponsored terrorist activities

armed with ballistic missile technology and nuclear weaponry."

Despite Pakistan designating the nearly 300-km range missile fired today as Ghaznavi, sources in the security establishment are of the view that the weapon is the old solid-fuelled Chinese built M-11 missile. Sources said Pakistan had been ascribing a variety of names to its missiles mainly acquired from China or North Korea. It is suspected that China has also provided Pakistan with the 800-km range M-9 missile. It is also possible that Beijing may be collaborating with Islamabad for the 2,000-km range M-18 weapon while North Korea, on its part, has provided Pakistan with its No-dong-1, rechristened Ghauri/Hatf-5. Pakistan has also, in the past, named the M-11 as Hatf-3/Shahen and the M-9 as Hatf-4/Shahen-I. Pakistan's much publicised 2000-km range Shahen-II — also called Hatf-6 — is suspected to be another name for the Chinese M-18.

THE HINDU

7 MAY 2007

India's patience wearing thin: PM

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TIMES NEWS NETWORK
AND AGENCIES
9-8 P. P. P. P.

Manali: Under pressure from world leaders to observe restraint, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Sunday said there was a limit to India's patience and Pakistan must stop cross-border terrorism.

Addressing a rally after laying the foundation stone of the Rs 1,300-crore Rohtang tunnel, which will connect Manali with Leh, Mr Vajpayee said, "India is determined to win the war against terrorism."

His remarks came in the wake of calls by world leaders, including U.S. President George Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and French President Jacques Chirac, for restraint on India's part. They have also asked Pakistan to take steps to end infiltration of terrorists into India.

Urging people to stay united at this crucial juncture, he said it was time the international community and Pakistan realised that India could not continue to put up with the proxy war for long. Referring to the U.S.-led Western forces' battle against terror in Afghanistan, he said, "When the entire world is fighting terrorism, how much of it can India tolerate?" According to Mr Vajpayee, Islamabad was encouraging

terrorism only because it would not be able to take on India in a face-to-face combat.

"We should have answered this cross-border terrorism immediately after the attack on parliament. But we succumbed to world opinion that although what happened was wrong, we should be patient and that similar incidents would not be repeated. But terrorist attacks have continued, the last being at Kalachuk in Jammu," he said.

He asserted that India should work unitedly and score a victory over terrorism. Stating that the country had been fighting cross-border terrorism for over ten years now, Mr Vajpayee claimed that his government had the support of all the political parties in its endeavour to rid the nation of the evil. Referring to President Pervez Musharraf's remarks that Kashmir was in the blood of Pakistanis, Mr Vajpayee said, "We want to stop playing with blood." He also expressed regret that Gen Musharraf had not fulfilled the promises he had made during his January 12 speech.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 MAY 2002

HID-8 26/5 CPI(M) protests 'pro-U.S.' policy

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, MAY 25. The central committee of the CPI(M), which met here on Saturday, decided to intensify its public campaign against the "pro-U.S. policy" of the Vajpayee Government.

On the second day of its meeting, the Committee said the Government was "unabashedly" pursuing a pro-U.S. policy in all spheres, despite the renewed 'U.S. hegemony.'

Sitaram Yechury, the CPI(M) politburo member told presspersons after the committee meeting that given the tensions on the border, India's "subservience" to U.S. interests, particularly in the military sphere, would have dangerous implications and would erode the nation's sovereignty of defence and security.

Mr. Yechury said the committee noted with concern the U.S. determined efforts to impose its military hegemony on the world. The Bush administration was bent on escalating the arms race and developing new weapons. In doing so, it had withdrawn from the ABM Treaty, and refused to ratify the biological weapons convention, he added.

He said that in a recent review of its nuclear policy, the U.S. had decided to adopt a more aggressive stand. The review called for "Unilateral Assured Destruction," which meant that nuclear powers such as Russia and China would be targeted by offensive measures. The U.S. was embarking on a policy of building new nuclear weapons to spark a long-term nuclear arms race. The recent Bush-Putin agreement had exposed the severe compromises being made by Russia, giving the U.S. a greater superiority in nuclear weapons.

Mr. Yechury said that taking those developments into consideration, the central committee had decided to intensify its campaign against U.S. imperialism, and conduct a series of mass awareness campaigns highlighting the dangers to the country and the world.

Surrender on Maruti Udyog

Mr. Yechury said the party denounced the "virtual handing over" of Maruti Udyog to the Japanese multinational company, Suzuki, by the NDA Government. The takeover of the public sector petroleum giant IPCL by Reliance would lead to a monopoly in the petroleum sector.

26/5 ✓
That would go against the avowed objective of privatisation to de-monopolise crucial sectors.

The central committee opposed the amendment to the Patents Act adopted in Parliament with the Congress support. The country had "bowed" to WTO pressure at a time when the U.S. Government had increased agriculture subsidies.

The central committee also expressed concern at the sharply deteriorating living conditions of the people in rural areas, following the fall in the prices of traditionally used commodities as a result of the withdrawal of import restrictions. The committee would support agitations planned by the Kisan Sabha and the agricultural labour organisations on the issue.

It expressed concern over the large number of scams, including the one involving Home Trade. The investment of Rs. 93 crores from the Seamen's Provident Fund was "shocking." It showed that liberalisation and deregulation of the financial sector was causing havoc. The proposal to invest Provident Fund money in capital and stock markets would lead to such scams and demanded a thorough probe

THE HINDI

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PM thanks world leaders

Archana Phull
Manali, May 25

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee is learnt to have written to US President George W. Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Russian President Vladimir Putin and French President Jacques Chirac, thanking them for their prompt responses on current India-Pakistan tensions.

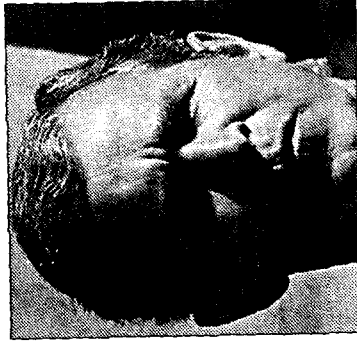
Vajpayee has asked the leaders to put more pressure on Islamabad, sources said.

The hectic pace of diplomacy, which has apparently kept the Prime Minister "over-busy" on his holiday, was likely to include telephonic conversations on Saturday evening with South African leader Nelson Mandela, Blair, Chirac and Jean Chretien, prime minister of Canada.

All these leaders had requested talks with him in view of high Indo-Pak tensions, the sources said.



Vladimir Putin, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, George W Bush



Will words blow war clouds away?

solidly behind the government on combating Pakistan-sponsored terror.

"I do not think that there is any change in the Congress strategy to support the government on the issue of terrorism. The government enjoys full support of Congress in its fight against terrorism," he said.

Sources said the Defence Minister George Fernandes

would reach Manali on Sunday to attend the foundation stone laying ceremony of the Rs 800-crore, strategically important Rohtang tunnel project.

National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra was also learnt to be arriving in Manali on Sunday to brief the Prime Minister on the meeting of the Atomic Energy Commission in Chennai.

Talking to reporters for a brief while after a local cultural function, the Prime Minister said the entire country was united in the war against terrorism.

On Congress chief Sonia Gandhi's criticism of his government's Kashmir policy, the Prime Minister said the Congress may have differences with the NDA, but was on the whole

India reserves the right to use N-weapons, says Omar Abdullah

Srinagar: Stating that India reserved the right to use its nuclear arsenal if nuked by Pakistan, minister of state for external affairs Omar Abdullah on Friday said that it was high time that Islamabad's "bluff" was called.



Omar Abdullah

"I don't think Pakistan is foolish enough to carry out a nuclear attack against us. They know the serious problems they will have to undergo," Mr Abdullah, who was here to attend the crucial unified command meeting chaired by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, told PTI here. "We have already assured the international community that we will not make the first use of nuclear weapons but that does not mean that we will not hit back if attacked," Mr Abdullah said. He said that Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf should take a look at the atlas and see for himself the size of his country as "compared with ours".

Asked whether this implied that the entire South Asian region was standing at a nuclear flashpoint, the minister said "this is where Musharraf has been able to garner points. If Pakistan had to use a nuclear weapon, then they could have used it during Kargil when their soldiers had to bite the dust at the hands of our troops".

Regretting the role of the international community, Mr Abdullah said "the world must not condone terrorism and effectively direct Pakistan to stop all kind of violence being perpetrated from its side in Jammu and Kashmir". Asked about the diplomatic offensive launched by the world community to defuse the growing tension between India and Pakistan, Mr Abdullah said "we don't need any ser-

mon, it is to those sitting across the border that all the talking needs to be done". He said Musharraf was playing on both sides of the fence. "While he is aligning with the world community in its fight against the Taliban on one hand, he supports militancy on the other hand in our state." Stating that New Delhi was contemplating all moves within the diplomatic parameters, Mr Abdullah said "closing of the Pakistan mission is also not ruled out".

Stating that the Pakistan High Commission was a supporter of over-ground separatist leaders of the state, he said "once it is shut, I wonder where these Hurriyat leaders will get their diktats from". Asked whether India was also giving a serious thought to reviewing the Indus-water treaty, Mr Abdullah said "everything means everything including this treaty".

" I don't think Pakistan is foolish enough to carry out a nuclear attack against us. They know the serious problems they will have to undergo "

To a question as to how India could go back on an international treaty, Mr Abdullah said "why is that the world always expects us to stick to a treaty. Pakistan has been violating every single treaty including the latest resolution 1373 passed by the United Nations after the September 11 attacks on the United States". The treaty was signed in the 1950s between India and Pakistan in which the World Bank acted as a guarantor. Under this treaty, India cannot store water of three rivers — Indus, Jhelum and Chenab — flowing through the state. PTI

More voices join chorus against Pak

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, May 24: India's strategy of "coercive diplomacy" in its fight against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism appears to be working.

A series of world players, including the European Commission, Japan, the UN and the Commonwealth, seem to be supporting Delhi's view that Islamabad needs to take urgent steps against terrorists operating from its soil to reduce the current tension in South Asia.

EU commissioner for external relation Chris Patten, today held a series of discussions with Indian leaders and senior officials to discuss the current tension in India-Pakistan relations, while making it clear that Islamabad has to give up terrorism as part of its foreign policy to deal with Delhi.

In the past 24 hours, world leaders joined voices with the rising chorus against Pakistan, urging it to take steps to tackle terrorism emanating from its soil. "Japan strongly expects

that Pakistan will take steps to effectively stop and prevent terrorist activities, including the infiltration across the Line of Control," said Japanese foreign minister Yoriko Kawaguchi.

Similar views were expressed by UN secretary-general Kofi Annan and Commonwealth secretary-general Don McKinnon yesterday in their conversation with the Indian leadership.

India told the European Commission that Delhi was exercising patience of "biblical proportion" in the face of grave provo-

cation from Pakistan, which continued to encourage terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere in the country. This was stated clearly by foreign minister Jaswant Singh and national security advisor Brajesh Mishra in separate meetings with Patten this afternoon.

Singh told him that though hopes were expressed by the international community that Pakistan would act against terrorists, so far nothing had happened. The reference was clearly at the EU's million-dollar eco-

nomic package, released to Pakistan yesterday, for boosting its ailing economy.

Patten, who had detailed discussions on the developments in the region with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, agreed with the Indian viewpoint. He observed that "it would be a most profound miscalculation if Pakistan were to rely on turning on and off the terror tap and to think that this could be an adjunct to diplomacy."

He made it clear that in order to reduce the tension between

India and Pakistan it was absolutely essential for Islamabad to first reduce the level of infiltration and terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Nirupama Rao, who briefed newsmen on Patten's meetings with the Indian leaders, said Delhi was "direct and candid" in expressing its views that Pakistan has to recognise that it cannot engage in cross-border terrorism and yet claim to be fighting terrorism as a member of the global coalition.

PM briefs Sonia on govt's steps against terrorism

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The government continued to deliberate on its response to the developments in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday. In the morning, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee briefed Congress president Sonia Gandhi about the government's diplomatic initiative and the border situation in an effort to strengthen the political consensus on terrorism. Later, the Cabinet Committee on Security met again to review the government's options in the light of continuing *fidyaen* (suicide) attacks in the state.

The meeting with the Congress president, who was accompanied by Manmohan Singh, took place at the Prime Minister's residence.

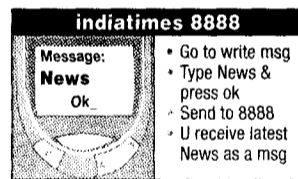
The meeting was also attended by home minister L.K. Advani and external affairs minister Jaswant Singh.

The government side saw the meeting as the beginning of an exercise to build a political unanimity on the issue of terrorist incursions from Pakistan before taking some more decisive measures against the neighbour.

"The leader of the opposition has been briefed about the diplomatic steps and the situation on the border," the external affairs minister

said. BJP spokesman V.K. Malhotra saw the meeting as a follow-up to the PM's assurance to parliament that he would consult the political parties before defining an appropriate response to Pakistan's involvement in cross-border terrorism.

"It sends a clear message to the world that India is united; more such meetings are expected," Mr Malhotra said. Asked about the implications of the Vajpayee-Sonia talk, Congress spokesman Anand Sharma said that the PM had taken the leader of opposition into confidence. "This was something expected to take place. In the fight against terrorism the Congress stand as expressed in parliament has been reiterated," he said.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

20 MAY 2002

A welcome move: Cong.

1107 By Our Special Correspondent f Rohan

NEW DELHI, MAY 18. India's decision to ask Pakistan to withdraw its High Commissioner, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, today received a mixed response from the political parties with the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party supporting the move and the Rashtriya Janata Dal saying it is inadequate.

The BJP virtually accused Mr. Qazi of "overstaying" and said New Delhi's move was a clear message to Islamabad that the Government viewed the situation seriously. The party general secretary, Pyarelal Khandelwal, said it was hoped that the international community would realise the seriousness of India's concerns. The senior BJP leader, J.P. Mathur, sharply criticised Mr. Qazi. He said that Mr. Qazi continued to stay in India "unashamedly" even after India recalled its High Commissioner in Islamabad.

He said that while it was a known fact that the embassy of every country had a position among its staff for an intelligence personnel, "this sort of job is never done through the Ambassador or High Commissioner", Mr. Mathur said.

The Congress too welcomed the diplomatic offensive of the Vajpayee Government and said the step was long overdue since New Delhi had recalled its envoy five months ago. The party spokesman, S. Jaipal

Reddy, said that instead of responding to the recall of the Indian envoy, Islamabad continued to pursue its own activities. His party supported the latest move on the diplomatic front.

19/5
The CPI(M) politburo, however, struck a somewhat different note. Its member, S. Ramachandran Pillai, said the party was unable to understand the "rationale" behind the move. He told *The Hindu* that even though the Government had assured in Parliament that it would consult the political parties before taking further steps, it had gone ahead with today's decision without explaining anything.

The Rashtriya Janata Dal too criticised the move for different reasons and called it an "eyewash". Such symbolic protests would not be enough. The RJD vice-president, Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, told correspondents that the menace of cross-border terrorism had to be dealt with firmly and not by taking such diplomatic steps. The Government had failed to isolate Pakistan internationally.

The CPI-ML general secretary, Dipankar Bhattacharya, felt that there was no substitute for a direct, effective diplomatic engagement and asked the Vajpayee Government to "stop the current policy of short-sighted adventurism and instead engage the Musharraf administration in a serious bilateral dialogue".

THE HINDU

'Weak-kneed' govt bowing to US: oppn

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Taking strong objection to US Secretary of State Colin Powell's remarks on Jammu and Kashmir, opposition parties in the Lok Sabha charged on Tuesday that this "intervention" in India's internal affairs had been brought about by the NDA's "weak-kneed" policy and its subservience to America.

Mr Powell's remarks that Kashmir was on the international agenda and his suggestion for international observers for the forthcoming J&K elections also came in for strong condemnation from NDA allies like the Samata Party, the Trinamul Congress and the Telugu Desam Party, which urged the government to respond strongly to these "objectionable statements".

Led by Congress chief whip Priyaranjan Dasmunshi, angry opposition members said Mr Powell's remarks were nothing but a "slur on India's sovereignty", adding that India should make it clear to the US and the entire international community that Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of the country and that the Indian government was competent enough to conduct elections in the border state. The opposition also took umbrage at the fact that the government had not made any statement in parliament regarding Mr Powell's visit.

Opposition leaders de-

manded that Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee clarify India's position, spell out the country's J&K policy and come out with a comprehensive response to Mr Powell's remarks.

Responding to an impromptu discussion on Mr Powell's remarks during zero hour, minister of state for external affairs Digvijay Singh assured the angry opposition parties that the government would not compromise on the country's sovereignty. "Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India," he reiterated, adding that India was very firm on this and had made it clear to the international community on several occasions.

As for Mr Powell's statement calling for a free and fair poll in J&K, Mr Singh said nobody should harbour doubts about "our" election system and added that free and fair polls had been held in the country for the last five decades. Recalling how a powerful Prime Minister like Indira Gandhi had been humbled in the election arena, Mr Singh said this was possible because of the effectiveness of the electoral system.

Mr Singh also rejected the opposition charge that Indian diplomacy had failed, stating that Mr Powell had actually supported India's consistent stand that the outstanding issues between India and Pakistan should be resolved bilaterally.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

9 1 JUL 2002

India, US view J&K elections differently

By Manoj Joshi
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Since September last year, New Delhi and Washington have been working together in dealing with terrorism. Despite dismay at Pakistan's new-found importance in Washington, India has accepted the US role and advice in resolving the Kashmir problem and dealing with the Pakistani belligerence.

But there are important differences between the two, especially in dealing with Kashmir: Some were visible on Sunday when US secretary of state Gen Colin Powell declared that the US wanted India to go ahead with the Kashmir elections, accept independent observers and release political prisoners.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The way the US sees it, the elections are the first step in the process of resolving the Kashmir problem. Their quick conclusion will help New Delhi in pulling back its forces that remain massed on the border and reduce the risk of an Indo-Pakistan conflict. It will also aid in the final step—an uninhibited Indo-Pak dialogue—that is needed to settle the dispute.

India's compulsions are different. Elections, especially those in which domestic separatists participate, will help in marginalising Pakistan and winning back the hearts and minds of the alienated Valley populace. A few of those willing to stake their lives in the process have signalled that they could do so if they were held minus the Abdullahs, which means postponing the poll date.

Some officials in New Delhi are inclined to agree with

this since they want an opportunity to clean up some of the human rights mess made by the National Conference government and provide a modicum of governance that is needed to showcase the elections to the people of the Valley and individual, though not institutional, observers. New Delhi doesn't want to forgo the opportunity that comes once in five years to root out separatist sentiment in the state.

Washington's compulsions arise from a wider regional perspective and it appears willing not to look too closely at the 'free and fair' element. With the compulsion to certify another poll, that is in Pakistan in October, the US is not likely to apply too exacting a definition on what constitutes a 'free and fair' poll.

Gen Powell's visit has not come up with anything dramatic, but it was not likely to. The time for theatrics has gone and Gen Powell is not that kind of a man, anyway.

His principal message to New Delhi has been to get on with the elections in Kashmir, complete the process of de-escalation and resume a dialogue with Pakistan. Reports that the government of India was angry with the US were exaggerated.

The General was feted by South Block and received by the Prime Minister and his new deputy.

Minus the United States, New Delhi has few options left in dealing with Pakistan. An unprecedented military build-up and a threat of war have not helped to curb Pakistan's support to Kashmir's insurgents.

There is a reported decline in infiltration, but this is something difficult to assess, since such terrorists don't usually leave their calling cards as they sneak through the notoriously difficult terrain.

30 JUL 2002

25/7

New Delhi not to allow foreign observers

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By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 28. India today made it clear that it would not allow international observers to either investigate or certify the coming elections in Jammu and Kashmir. The Foreign Office spokesperson told presspersons that India did not object to diplomats or others visiting Jammu and Kashmir on an individual basis. Whosoever was able to obtain visas for India could travel to the State, she stressed.

Interpreting the remarks made on observers by the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, at his press conference today, the spokesperson claimed that the General did not make a pitch for international observers. She made it clear that NGOs would not be permitted to monitor the elections. This position had been conveyed to all interlocutors, including the United States.

Referring to the meeting between the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and Gen. Powell, he spokesperson said Mr. Vajpayee conveyed to him that infiltration across the Line of Control

was continuing. Pakistan had also not dismantled the infrastructure of terrorism.

India was committed to holding free and fair elections in Jammu and Kashmir but it was necessary to bring down the levels of violence there. Attempts to sabotage the elections, she said, must not be permitted to succeed. Any dialogue with Pakistan would depend on the policies it pursued — how it dealt with infiltration and the dismantling of the terrorism infrastructure. She made it clear that India would closely monitor Pakistan's approach to the elections.

During the discussions Gen. Powell had with his Indian interlocutors today (which included the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, and the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Brajesh Mishra) there was a clear effort not to allow Indo-U.S. relations to be circumscribed by Indo-Pak. issues.

Asked if the General had been prescriptive in his fairly detailed comments on the situation in the sub-continent, the spokesperson said no such attempt had been detected.

29 JUL 2002

THE HINDU

Climate not conducive to talks, Powell told

Saurabh Shukla
New Delhi, July 27

INDIA TOLD visiting US Secretary of State Colin Powell that the conditions for a dialogue with Pakistan did not exist. A cautious Powell later said that he was only exploring "possibilities" of finding a solution to the India-Pakistan standoff.

External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha told reporters before he met Powell that "India has always held that if the necessary conditions for talks are created, we will have talks. But we do not think that necessary conditions exist at present."

Briefing reporters after the meeting, the MEA spokesperson said Powell had told Sinha the US expects its friends, to "keep their pledges", which means Washington recognises the need for Pakistan to keep up the heat on the jihadis.

During the talks, India took an uncompromising position that it would not hold a dialogue until Pakistan ends its support to cross-border terrorism. Sinha told Powell that the US had to ensure that Pakistan kept the promises it had made to Washington on terrorism. President Pervez Musharraf's initial measures were merely "tactical", designed to fool the world, Sinha said. There was clear evidence that Musharraf had taken only temporary steps to reduce infiltration.

Sinha cited the continuing presence of terrorist communication facilities, landing stations and command centres in PoK as evidence that Pakistan was not genuinely interested in ending terrorism. He argued that the presence of these facilities was sending the message to militants in Kashmir that supply lines were still intact. Powell was told that infiltration had increased early this month.

India has proof that Hizbul men in Pak targeted Kalam

Swati Chaturvedi
New Delhi, July 27

"HE SHOULD not have agreed to become the President of a *kafir* State." This is an intercept of a radio message from a Pakistan-based Hizbul Mujahideen commander to a contact in Jammu and Kashmir.

The reference was to APJ Abdul Kalam, and the message was intercepted on July 8, soon after the missile scientist agreed to be the NDA's presidential candidate. Around the same time, a botched attempt was made on Kalam's life in Chennai. Some of the would-be assassins are believed to have had Hizbul links.

This and several other signal intelligence intercepts are part of a dossier put together by India to present to Colin Powell as proof that General Pervez Musharraf has reneged on his January 12 pledge to dismantle the Pakistan-based communications network of the Kashmir jihadis.

Around 70 messages from control stations in Pakistan and PoK to terrorists in the Kashmir valley have been picked up by eavesdropping satellites since June this year.

The staple of the communication (transcripts of which are available with *Hindustan Times*) is a one-way harangue against "betrayers" Musharraf and the most commonly heard speakers are Hizbul chief Syed Salahuddin and Jaish-e-Mohammed boss Masood Azhar. Defence Minister George Fernandes says he would like to know how a man supposedly in prison manages to give long, fiery sermons against the military dictator of the country.

A July 6 intercept picked from the Jaish radio Afaq has a man called Khizr Bhai telling a field operative details of a planned suicide attack on Minister of State for External Affairs Omar Abdullah during a visit to Mahore, Udhampur, on July 10. Security agencies got Omar to put off the trip.

En route to New Delhi, Powell had made it clear he was not expecting a breakthrough. "I want to make sure we are not just stopped. I want to see what both sides might be willing to do to keep going down that escalatory ladder." But he insisted, "Ultimately, we have to get to dialogue or else we will just be stuck on a plateau which would not serve our inter-

ests." Powell said he would explore all "possibilities" with both sides during this trip.

Delegation-level talks followed Powell's one-on-one with Sinha. The US team included Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca. India's ambassador to the US, Lalit Mansingh, was part of the Indian delegation.

It is encouraging terrorism, says BJP

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 19. The Bharatiya Janata Party is beginning to get disillusioned with the United States and is no longer willing to go along with the view that the world's only superpower is able to or interested in putting an end to terrorism emanating from Pakistan.

The party spokesperson, Vijay Kumar Malhotra, could not have been more forthright when he said today that the American "clean chit to Pakistan (after the latest massacre in Jammu) amounted to encouragement of terrorism by the United States."

Expressing his disappointment that the U.S. had rejected the Indian demand that Pakistan be declared a terrorist state, Mr. Malhotra said his party regretted that the American attitude towards terrorism rooted in Afghanistan and terrorism emanating from Pakistan was different. The meaning was clear, the Al-Qaeda had targeted America and was therefore worthy of being declared enemy number one, while Pakistani terrorist groups were targeting India and could, therefore, be ignored.

Mr. Malhotra said India knew that it had to fight its own battle against terrorism (and not depend on the United States or anybody else to do this).

Clearly, his statement today indicated (although this was not said) that the party is beginning to see that the Centre's per-

ceived dependence on the U.S. as the commander of the global fight against terrorism is beginning to be politically counter-productive.

On the issue of legislation on electoral reforms, Mr. Malhotra said the BJP had given its suggestions on the proposed bill in writing to the Law Minister, Janna Krishnamurthi. The party was basically in agreement with the proposed legislation. After the Bihar development in which a Minister was convicted of murder (and, therefore, forced to resign), Mr. Malhotra felt that the bill had become urgent. I would put a brake on the perception that politicians were not willing to end criminalisation of politics.

It's for EC to decide: Naidu

By Our Special Correspondent

HYDERABAD, JULY 19. "It is for the Election Commission to decide when to hold elections and for the people of Gujarat to judge who they should bless with a mandate", the Chief Minister, N. Chandrababu Naidu, told newsmen here on Friday, when they sought his reaction to the Modi Government's decision to dissolve the Gujarat Assembly and go for a snap poll. Mr. Naidu recalled how the TDP had stoutly opposed such a move by the BJP at the height of communal disturbances in that State.

THE HINDU

20 JUL 2002

South Block office set for split

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, July 16: It's the season of splits. After the proposal to carve up railway zones, a move is on to bifurcate the foreign office.

After nearly three decades, policy planners are thinking of separating the spokesperson's office from that of external publicity in an attempt to keep pace with changing times and face its new challenges.

The possibility of Nirupama Rao, the foreign ministry spokesperson and joint secretary of the external publicity division, being promoted to additional secretary within a few weeks has added seriousness to the move.

South Block sources said the new foreign secretary, Kan-

wal Sibal, is keen on the bifurcation, though the suggestion to split the spokesperson's office and the external publicity division has been doing the rounds for a while. Sibal, they added, is playing a proactive role in sprucing up the ministry.

Till recently, there were talks that the spokesperson's office and that of the external publicity division may be upgraded from the joint secretary's level to that of additional secretary. If that happened, Rao could have continued in her present post.

But indications suggest that neither foreign minister Yashwant Sinha nor the foreign secretary is keen on that.

A search to find a replacement for Rao has, therefore,

begun in earnest over the past few days.

There are two main contenders — Navtej Sarna and Gautam Mukhopadhyay. Both are from the 1980 batch of the Indian Foreign Service and are competent officers with ample exposure and experience to handle media and external publicity.

The two were promoted to joint secretary rank a few months ago. The name of Bhaswati Mukherjee, joint secretary (West Europe) in the foreign ministry, has also been doing the rounds. But going by signals from South Block, it could be either Sarna or Mukhopadhyay.

Sarna was till recently in the Indian embassy in Washington and was, among other

things, in charge of handling the media and publicity. Mukhopadhyay had worked in the external publicity division in the mid-1990s as director and later worked in the Indian Permanent Mission office at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

The rationale behind the move to separate the spokesperson's office from that of external publicity is to ensure that the former gets more time to concentrate on articulating the government's views on foreign policy matters.

Similarly, the move entails giving more scope to the head of the external publicity division so that the official can focus on drawing up strategies to counter publicity and propaganda inimical to India's interest.

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JAMMU KILLINGS / POWELL CALLS UP SINHA

Spotlight on diplomatic options

16/7
By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, JULY 15. The United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell, telephoned the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, late last night to express his condolences on Saturday's terrorist attack.

Gen. Powell joined the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, and the French Foreign Minister, Dominique Villepin, in personally calling Mr. Sinha to condemn the incident.

Sources said that Gen. Powell told Mr. Sinha that the U.S. would continue to pressure Pakistan on reining in terrorist outfits that could be involved in the Jammu massacre.

The Danish presidency of the European Union also strongly condemned the senseless attack on innocent civilians which took place near Jammu.

"The European Union deplores the loss of lives and expresses its condolences with the bereaved families and the Government of India. The attack underscores the importance of the international community coming together in the fight against terrorism worldwide," a release issued here said.

Japan, too, has used phraseology similar to the European Union in condemning the killings. "The Government of Japan expresses its deepest condolences to the victims, the bereaved families, and the people of India," the Japanese statement said.

"The Government of Japan resolutely condemns terrorism in any form as we reconfirmed in our Japan-India Joint Declaration, signed by Japanese and Indian

Prime Ministers in Tokyo, on December 10, 2001," it added. The condemnation of the dastardly killings, though important, has become a ritual especially after the September 11 terrorist attack in New York and Washington. While their condemnation is important in itself, the Jammu killings place under the spotlight of the diplomatic approach to Pakistan and Kashmir to be taken by New Delhi as well as the American-led Western world.

As the Government statement on Jammu is awaited in Parliament, it is becoming increasingly evident that there is only that much that the U.S., Britain, the E.U. and Japan can do to pressure Pakistan further.

Undoubtedly, Pakistan and its President, Pervez Musharraf, have had to withdraw from openly backing the Kashmir "jihad" as he did soon after taking power in October 1999, following the diplomatic pressure mounted by India through the U.S. and its allies. But a "permanent end" to infiltration, which has been quite rightly sought by India, is quite another thing.

In the post-September 11 world, supporters of violence, to achieve any aim, are unlikely to make much headway as Gen. Musharraf may have found. Institutional support to terrorism from Pakistan has definitely come under pressure, but this could well be a tactical shift to appease the U.S. and its allies. Given the diplomatic measures already taken against Pakistan following the December 13 attack on Parliament House, India may find that there is not

much to "add" as far as punitive diplomacy is concerned. While any drawdown of these punitive measures may well be on hold following Saturday's carnage, the U.S. and their allies will also have to stretch their diplomatic initiatives to keep up the pressure on Pakistan on the issue of terrorism.

The killing of French technicians and the attack on the U.S. consulate in Karachi also indicate that the regrouping "jehadis" are directing their ire towards internal, Pakistani targets in a big way.

The General will definitely point to this "problem" that he is facing when he meets with top British and American visitors to Islamabad in the near future.

The debate on whether Gen. Musharraf and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Directorate are in a position to control the movement of each and every "jehadi" element will prove to be an endless one.

For America and its Western allies, Pakistan is a key element in the battle against the Al-Qaeda and in possible initiatives to nab Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar.

While backing the Indian position, it remains to be seen how far the Western world is prepared to go in pressuring Gen. Musharraf on Kashmir without jeopardising Pakistani support to the ongoing operations against Al-Qaeda within Pakistan.

Pakistani credibility on what it does and claims not to do in Kashmir may be extremely low, but India could well realise that putting all the eggs in the Western diplomatic basket may not yield the desired results in curbing terrorism.

Sinha to visit Maldives, Sri Lanka

By Amit Baruah

J. P. Panu 1101 107

NEW DELHI, JULY 9. The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, will pay an official visit to Sri Lanka and the Maldives from July 10 to 12.

It comes just after a visit by the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, to New Delhi last month. "This visit reflects the importance that the Government of India attaches to enhancing bilateral relations with neighbouring countries and to the promotion of good neighbourliness and enhanced economic cooperation," the spokesperson for the External Affairs Ministry announced today.

This will be the first foreign tour by Mr. Sinha since taking over his new assignment. He will first travel to the Maldives and then to Sri Lanka.

Asked whether Mr. Sinha's visit was to have been undertaken by Jaswant Singh earlier, the spokesperson said: "I think in both these cases invitations had been there for our Minister to visit and we have decided to im-



plement these proposals. But I think the fact that our Minister has assumed charge last week provides a certain sense of further importance... to these visits." To a question on what message Mr. Sinha would convey to the Sri Lankan leadership on the ongoing peace process in that country, she said, "we will be expressing our continuing support for the restoration of peace and stability in that island nation and the ongoing process of dialogue." She specifically referred to the support

that India had extended to Sri Lanka's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

On the apparent lack of steam in the peace process, she said "I don't think I should make a pronouncement on the manner in which the process is going forward except to underline the support we have expressed for it and the fact that we continue to monitor that process as a neighbouring country, as a close friend and partner of Sri Lanka."

The visit, she said, would enable New Delhi to acquire an up-to-date assessment of what was happening in the dialogue process.

Asked whether Mr. Sinha would raise the issue of the Indian request to extradite the LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, in connection with the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, she said the request for extradition "continued to stand". The request had been operational since June 1995. It had been renewed on "various occasions" since then — the last occasion being as recently as April 2002.

There had been no change in New Delhi's policy or approach towards the extradition request.

The spokesperson was categorical that India would not get involved in the Sri Lankan peace process as had been proposed by Mr. Prabhakaran at his press conference earlier this year.

During his visit, Mr. Sinha will continue the economic dialogue since the inception of the India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Talks to review the FTA were held in June in Delhi and in Colombo earlier this month. A task force is being set up to evolve an "FTA II and Beyond" agreement.

In a separate development, the spokesperson announced that the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, had sent a message of condolence to the Afghan leader, Hamid Karzai, following the assassination of the country's Vice-President, Haji Abdul Qadir. Mr. Vajpayee said that Haji Qadir's assassination was an effort by hostile forces to promote instability and intolerance in Afghanistan.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Sinha to form advisory panel

Saurabh Shukla
New Delhi, July 3

THE MINISTRY of External Affairs may get a more professional look with its new Minister Yashwant Sinha taking charge today.

Taking a cue from his experience in the Ministry of Finance where he had constituted an informal advisory group of financial experts and business leaders, Sinha may also seek some expert opinion on foreign policy and strategic issues by constituting an experts panel of advisers.

Talking to *Hindustan Times*, Sinha described his movement to South Block as a transfer.

"Experts will continue to play a role and I will endeavour to continue with that practice in the Ministry of External Affairs. The advantage is that there is in-house expertise in the foreign office of the Indian Foreign Service, which we will utilise, besides, I would also look for advice from former diplomats and strategic experts," he said.

He said while in Foreign Office he will stress on teamwork and building a team. "Foreign office deals with country in totality...the proactive approach will continue...as far as foreign policy is concerned it is a mat-



AP PHOTO

Yashwant Sinha and Digvijay Singh hug after taking charge of their new offices in Delhi on Wednesday.

ter of consensus and it is not partisan and opposition will be taken into confidence this will

continue," he said.

After assuming his office in South Block accompanied by his

Deputy, Digvijay Singh and Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal, Sinha struck a note of caution during his interaction with the media and said, "We need to be very, very careful in our dealings with General Musharraf. He tried to backtrack from his assurance not once but three to four times," he said.

The new External Affairs Minister said, "Incidents in the past two to three days have proved that the situation has gone back to same as before May 24 when Musharraf had promised not to allow export of terrorism from Pakistani soil. Quite clearly, we are looking not only at the assurances of Pakistan that infiltration from across the border will be permanently stopped. But we are looking for visible and credible signs of that action," he asserted.

He also firmly ruled out any third party mediation in Jammu and Kashmir and said that the situation remain unchanged on the question of sending a High Commissioner to Pakistan.

Yashwant plans to pressure Pakistan to stop cross-border infiltration through what he describes as economic diplomacy. Another priority is a permanent Security Council seat for India.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7/3/99

10-17
By K.K. Katyal

A 'new-look' Foreign Office

g. f. P. Sub

NEW DELHI, JULY 2. Rarely in the past did the Foreign Office get a completely new look at the top as is the case now, with a new political head, Yashwant Shina, and a new administrative leader, Kanwal Sib-al. Not that it was planned that way, it being a matter of chance that the change of Foreign Secretary, decided some time back, coincided with the shuffle of the Union Cabinet, involving a swap that brought Mr. Sinha from Finance to External Affairs and took Jaswant Singh from the Foreign Office to Finance. Since the totality of the change was not the result of a conscious decision, it will be pointless to look for signs of policy changes in it. To the extent the styles of individual ministers differ, the functioning of the ministry and the implementation processes may not necessarily be the same as in the past.

This is a simple point but needs to be emphasised. The swap was anticipated and, as such, diplomatic tongues had been wagging for days about the implications of the change. Will Mr. Yashwant Sinha be able to master the

intricacies of the new assignment? Will the new orientations, particularly the pro-U.S. slant, continue? Should a shift be expected in the handling of the relationship with Pakistan? Those who ask these questions do not take into account the functioning of the system here — in particular the fact that the Prime Minister has played a major role in shaping major policies and sometimes in implementation of major policies. It was within this framework that Mr. Jaswant Singh operated — and did a creditable job. He was not the sole framer of policies but a part — an essential part, at that, of the top-level apparatus. To say this is not to deny him the credit due to him but to suggest that continuity in foreign policy will not be expected.

Here is a joke that used to do the rounds in the Central Hall of Parliament during the tenure of the Janata Party government under Morarji Desai: Q: Morarjibhai formulates foreign policy, Jagat Mehta (then Foreign Secretary) executes it, what does A.B. Vajpayee (then External Affairs Minister) do? Ans. Atalji translates it into Hindi. This of course, was not a charitable comment on

Mr. Vajpayee's performance for, in some cases — for instance, in the dialogue with Zia-ul-Haq's Pakistan — he did a commendable job. In any case, Mr. Jaswant Singh had a much wider space to function, a lot more scope for initiatives, and had achieved some concrete results.

In one area — the equation between the political boss and the bureaucracy — the style of the new External Affairs Minister will be watched closely. In the past, on some occasions, the Foreign Office mandarins got the feeling that their advice was either not sought or not given due weight or was brushed aside. There are several instances — the promptness in announcing support to the U.S. plans for missile defence or the line to be taken on Robert Mugabe's election success in Zimbabwe.

Mr. Sinha starts with one distinct advantage, familiarity with economic diplomacy. Among his immediate tasks — dealing with Pakistan, keeping up the momentum of the "new beginning" with the U.S., pursuing the slow but steadily task of deepening and expanding ties with China, greater attention to Europe, on the one hand, and neighbourhood on the other.

The Jas-Yash switch

Foreign policy is too vital to be left to the proclivities of individuals

EVERY change in ministerial posts brings with it many inevitable questions. Which way would India's foreign policy head with Yashwant Sinha at its helm is one that would naturally excite curiosity, not just in India but in the capitals of the world. We in this country tend to personalise most issues and there is, therefore, the tendency to see our foreign policy in terms of personalities, whether they be Nehru, Indira, Rajiv, Gujral or Jaswant Singh. The truth, however, is that it remains the country's foreign policy, although it may carry the imprint of the person who had helped shape it. Jaswant Singh's tenure will, no doubt, go down as one of the most successful ones, where a complete turnaround in relations with the greater powers was achieved in a very short time.

Foreign policy, in essence, is all about protecting, sustaining and furthering national interests. And these can be broadly categorised as economic and/or security interests which could well present contradictory choices at times. But it is extremely important that a binding synergy is maintained between them at all times. The high point of this synergy in recent years came during the Kargil war three years ago; and now once again in the war-like situation after December 13, where the threat and use of military force was strongly meshed into diplomacy to achieve political goals. But while things have

been managed well in actual events, institutionally we have not moved toward managing these various strands effectively and knitting them into a whole. For example, the section in the external affairs ministry dealing with international and national security affairs is both grossly understaffed and over-worked.

After Monday's reshuffle all eyes will now be on Yashwant Sinha, the man who will now occupy Jaswant Singh's chair in South Block. He comes in at a time when India's relations with almost all nations, with the exception of Pakistan, are on an even keel. Certainly it would be a mistake to regard him a novice in the world of diplomacy, having handled complex economic issues in the international arena. He is obviously conversant with our economic interests and must have attended more cabinet meetings dealing with security and foreign policy issues than any other finance minister in the past. In any case, we must remember that we are not living in medieval times. A modern nation-state must of necessity rely on an extensive institutional system to carry out the complex tasks of foreign policy. The new minister would have the complete institution of the external affairs ministry at his disposal; and it is to be hoped that he will respect the professional advice given to him. Foreign policy is far too important to be left to the individual preferences and proclivities of ministers.

MUSHARRAF HAD GIVEN COMMITMENT TO STOP INFILTRATION ACROSS LOC: USA

Pak can't renege on pledge

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 24. — India today said there was no question of General Pervez Musharraf going back on his pledge to end cross-border terrorism, asserting Pakistan's commitment on permanently ending infiltration remained "undiluted". New Delhi, however, warned that if Islamabad renege on this pledge, it would have to take a "closer look" at what needed to be done.

New Delhi dubbed the General's denial of his promise made to Washington to permanently end cross-border terrorism as "verbal callisthenics", and a refusal to see the writing on the wall. "Pakistan has committed itself to fighting terrorism. This is an unambiguous and clear commitment lending itself to no other interpretations".

"It has been conveyed to us in categorical terms that commitment about permanently ending infiltration of terrorists across the LoC have repeatedly been given by General Musharraf. Despite some occasional verbal callisthenics by Pakistan, this is a commitment that remains, undiluted," the external affairs spokesperson

said. "Pledges are pledges. We don't believe nations can go back on them," she said, pointing that the General's latest statements were not a "well-considered deliberate response" of the kind that India expected to the "very forward-reaching measures that we have taken".

In an interview to *Newsweek* published yesterday, the Pakistan President denied giving any commitment to the US Deputy Secretary of State, Mr Richard Armitage, a claim dismissed by the US embassy here today. The embassy spokesperson said President Musharraf had on 6 June assured Washington that "ending of infiltration across the LoC would be permanent... We have seen positive results from that commitment and we have also seen significant positive steps by

EU plea reflects India's concern

NEW DELHI, June 24. — Mr L K Advani today said the European Union's latest appeal to Pakistan to do more to curb the flow of militants into Jammu and Kashmir reflected India's concerns over cross-border terrorism.

Mr Advani, who returned after a five-day visit to Spain, said he was happy over the declaration adopted by the 15-nation EU at its just concluded summit in the Spanish town of Seville. The declaration showed that the EU appreciated India's concerns over cross-border terrorism.

— PTI

India since then."

Notwithstanding the General's claim in the interview, New Delhi suggested it was willing to take the General's commitment to Washington as an indicator of Islamabad's "statement of intent" rather than what the General said in the interview. India expects "action" on the commitments made by Pakistan to end terrorism, stop infiltration and dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism in that country.

"We want Pakistan to abide by its commitments... These are commitments on which Pakistan must deliver if we are to see lasting peace and stability in our region and reduction in tensions."

Pakistan, the MEA spokesperson said, is refusing to see the writing on the wall and recognise the need to permanently

end terrorism. "It is therefore necessary for all of us who are fighting terrorism, who are engaged in the struggle against these forces of terror to remind Pakistan of its commitments," she said.

The British foreign secretary, Mr Jack Straw, spoke to the foreign minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, for about 10 minutes on the situation in the region. Pakistan's commitment to end cross-border terrorism is also reported to have figured in the conversation.

Asked whether India would reconsider its stand in the event of Islamabad reneging on its promises, she said, "we will have to take a closer look on what needs to be done and where we go from here".

Asked about the "contradictory" comments — the Prime Minister saying there was no abatement in the level of infiltration and the Defence Minister, Mr George Fernandes, having said recently that infiltration is almost negligible — the spokesperson said, "We are yet to see on the ground a permanent trend that suggests that infiltration is tapering off and is coming to a definite end."

No change in LoC situation: Pak, page 2

THE STATESMAN

29 JUN 2002

No de-escalation for now: Delhi

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 17. — India today said it was premature to talk about de-escalation on the Indo-Pak border despite the "perceptible change" in Pakistan's attitude. India also emphasised that there was no room for a third party or regional organisations like Saarc in settling bilateral issues. Delhi has assured that it would not be found wanting in "responding positively" to concrete steps taken by Pakistan.

The foreign ministry spokesperson, Mrs Nirupama Rao, said the perceptible change in Islamabad's attitude "has not yet provided us with the comfort of thinking that this is a permanent shift".

India has welcomed Pakistan's assurances regarding dismantling infrastructure of terrorist outfits, "but we need to see and ascertain how best Pakistan translates these assurances into action on the ground". She said the withdrawal of troops would depend on how the situation unfolded on the question of infiltration and cross-border terrorism.

"You have a situation on the LoC and in the Valley where there have been continuous attempts by Pakistan-backed

Pullback desirable: Pak

ISLAMABAD, June 17. — Emphasising that an "immediate" withdrawal of Indo-Pak troops from the border was "very desirable", Pakistan today said it would reciprocate any step that India would take in this regard.

Though it described as "cosmetic" the Indian gesture of lifting overflight ban on its aircraft and withdrawal of warships from the Arabian sea, Pakistan said it was considering opening its skies to Indian flights. "Once India withdraws its forces, we will certainly reciprocate the gesture. I think it is a very desirable thing that should be done immediately. We were obliged to send our forces to forward positions only in a defensive posture after India deployed its forces," the foreign office spokesman, Mr Aziz Ahmed Khan, said. — PTI

elements to violate the atmosphere of stability there."

India, she said, has received "indications" that Pakistan would take action to permanently quell, control and eliminate their capabilities for supporting terrorism.

Asked about suggestions that Saarc could play a role in resolving problems between the two countries, Mrs Rao said it had been "clearly and unambiguously conveyed" to the visiting Bangladeshi foreign minister, Mr Morshed Khan, that all Indo-Pak bilateral issues can be discussed only between the two countries. The Indian position was accepted by the Bangladeshi side, she said.

Mr Khan today met the Prime Minister, foreign minister and the national security adviser, Mr Brajesh Mishra.

The Bangladesh Minister arrived from Pakistan yesterday on his mission to impress on the two countries the need to lower tensions and resume their dialogue to address outstanding issues.

The issue of North-east insurgent groups operating in Bangladesh also came up during the parleys.

Both sides agreed on the need to intensify measures to check infiltration but recognise the impediments coming in the way of effectively stopping this in view of the 4,096-km long porous border.

THE STATESMAN

18 JUN 2002

H.P. Bhatia

West adopting dual policy: BJP H.P. 11

By Our Correspondent

JAMMU, JUNE 16. The Bharatiya Janata Party president, K. Jana Krishnamurthy, today accused the western powers, including the United States, of adopting different policies towards Pakistan and India. Addressing a press conference here, he said in a reference to the U.S. that it was an irony that the country which was leaving no stone unturned to convince India to initiate diplomatic ties with Pakistan was itself closing down its consulate in that country following a terrorist attack.

He said pious methods and words were not enough to end

terrorism in Pakistan. It would only be possible if stringent steps were taken, and the Pakistan President, General Pervez Musharraf, must realise this.

Describing India's campaign against terrorism as successful, Mr. Krishnamurthy said the country's efforts had certainly succeeded in convincing the world about its concern for terrorism which had killed thousands of innocent people.

Asked about the increased U.S. intervention in the country, he said, "Now the U.S. is on our side in our fight against terrorism as they have realised the ground realities prevailing here."

Accusing the Left parties of adopting an "anti-national agenda", he said their opposition to A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's candidature for the President's post was baseless. To become the country's President one need not be a constitutional expert. Even the Congress had accepted Dr. Kalam's nomination, he added.

About the BJP's choice for the post of Vice-President, he said the party, along with the other coalition partners, would discuss about the likely candidates. Till now, no decision had been taken in this respect.

Attacking the Congress President, Sonia Gandhi, for her

statements in Gujarat, the BJP president said they showed that she was still politically immature.

Asked if there was any change in the BJP's stand on autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir, he said the Prime Minister had already stated that he was ready to discuss the autonomy report although the party was opposed to the autonomy which the Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, was demanding.

Mr. Krishnamurthy said the BJP was preparing for the Assembly polls in J&K and an election committee at the State and Central levels had been constituted to decide on the candidates.

THE HINDU

17 JUN 2002

India has succeeded in turning terrorism and peace from bilateral to international issues

Acting in concert

DIPLOMACY

K.P. NAYAR

Just as it happened during the Kargil settlement three years ago, New Delhi's terms for diffusing the latest India-Pakistan crisis were set out by national security adviser and principal secretary to the prime minister, Brajesh Mishra. With a clarity which has been part of Mishra's public persona since his famous enunciation of the Indian position in the United Nations on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan 33 years ago as South Block's permanent representative in New York, Mishra drew the *lakshmanrekha* on Kashmir during his one-day air-dash to Moscow from Almaty last week. The media blitz around the high profile involvement of the United States of America's envoys, Donald Rumsfeld and Richard Armitage, has somewhat obscured the important role that Russia played in lowering the temperature in south Asia in the last few days.

A crucial 10-minute meeting on Thursday between Mishra and the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, who had just returned home from Almaty, resulted in a chain of events without which Armitage's visit to Islamabad and New Delhi would not have produced any results. For the prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who had a two-hour meeting with Putin in Almaty, it was history repeating itself. Three years ago, Bill Clinton, another honest broker between India and Pakistan, had created a dilemma for Vajpayee. Clinton had invited Pakistan's then prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, to the US and he wanted Vajpayee to join the duo in working out a settlement on Kargil. Vajpayee could not be seen as agreeing to Clinton's mediation — or any mediation — on what was a clear case of Pakistani invasion of Indian territory. Apart from the principle involved, there was politics. With elections just round the corner, Sonia Gandhi would have attempted to make electoral mince-meat of the Bharatiya Janata Party on that one issue alone.

So it was left to Mishra to tell Clinton's national security adviser, Sandy Berger, why Vajpayee could not accept the White House invitation, howsoever well-intentioned it may have been. Last week, there was an uncomfortable resurrection of the same dilemma. This time, its author was Putin, who asked the Indian prime minister if he would join the Russian and Pakistani presidents for a meeting in Moscow similar to the one Clinton had proposed in 1999.

Putin is a keen follower of history, and in making decisions he looks to the past as a valuable guide in his efforts to restore Russia's glory. The Russian president was only 13 when the Soviet prime minister, Alexei Kosygin, mediated between Lal Bahadur Shastri and Ayub Khan in what was

then a breakthrough for Soviet diplomacy in south Asia. Putin's personal interest in India has grown since his years as deputy mayor in St. Petersburg, and after becoming president, he has talked to some of those still in the Kremlin, who were associated with the Tashkent declaration.

Vajpayee knows that Putin is eager to play a greater role in world affairs, and if anything was tailor-made for that role, it was the subcontinental crisis, given Moscow's history at Tashkent three and a half decades ago.

Putin met Pervez Musharraf before his talks with Vajpayee, and put it to the Pakistani president that a trilateral Moscow summit could be arranged. Musharraf eagerly seized on the idea. But when the proposal was mooted with Vajpayee, the prime minister had exactly the same reaction that he had when Clinton extended the invitation to Washington three years ago. And yet, Putin's enthusiasm had to be checked without appearing to be dismissive. After all, Russia has been the staunchest supporter of India on the global stage since the fight against terrorism became everybody's war, and has repeatedly equated America's fight against terrorism post-September 11 with India's own struggle against cross-border terrorism at his meetings with world leaders. And as recently as last fortnight, when Pakistan threatened to take its crisis with India to the security council, Moscow had communicated to New Delhi a readiness to use its veto in the UN if it came to that.

But these were not the only reasons why Mishra was detained to draw the *lakshmanrekha* in Moscow. Putin's proposal for a trilateral summit and Musharraf's reaction to the idea in Almaty gave the Indian delegation a valuable insight into Pakistan's thinking on the crisis. Because Musharraf had rushed to the media with Putin's suggestion of a trilateral peace summit in Moscow without leaving the Russian president — as etiquette demanded — to announce invitations to India and Pakistan, Vajpayee's delegation concluded that India's stern messages were not getting through to the core of the Pakistani establishment. By preempting Putin and announcing the invitation to himself and to Vajpayee, Musharraf was proclaiming his genuine belief that Vajpayee would not turn down the idea of a Moscow summit. This, in turn, signalled Pakistan's belief that India was looking for a way out of the current military stalemate.

That he may have been encouraged

in this belief by the statements and actions of other leading nations also became clear at Musharraf's press conference. He asked India to shed its hypocrisy about third party involvement in the Kashmir dispute. What are the envoys from Britain, America, Russia and many other governments doing if not mediating, he sarcastically asked at his press conference.

choking off and altogether eliminating the terrorist menace coming out of Pakistan.

India also welcomed any outside role in avoiding a war in south Asia. But when it came to working out any broader or permanent equations with Islamabad, third parties could have no role. Kashmir, Siachen, Wullar barrage, whatever, has to be settled bilaterally



‘ Brajesh Mishra's Moscow parleys made Musharraf realize that his game was up ’

ally between India and Pakistan. Whether it was the US, Britain or Russia, they will be kept out and this was non-negotiable.

Mishra's elucidation of the Indian position has already had, and will continue to have, very significant repercussions on the course of Indo-Pak relations in the months and years to come. An immediate fall-out of this clarification was Musharraf's realization that neither he nor the international community could bend India to suit their plans. That became clear when the much-touted US-British proposal for monitoring infiltration —

which in any case had received a negative reaction from New Delhi — went flying out of the window as soon as Mishra made the Indian position clear in Moscow.

But Mishra's Moscow parleys also made Musharraf realize that his game was up: he could no longer pursue his double-talk and subterfuge. A clever survivor, Musharraf realized that he could be the casualty of any continuing Indian hardline stance against Pakistan. Soon after Mishra finished his meetings in Moscow, the Russian foreign minister, Igor Ivanov, spoke to his counterparts in London, Paris, Tokyo and Washington. The contents of the briefing of the defence minister, Sergei Ivanov, for Rumsfeld, his US counterpart, in Brussels the following day changed considerably in the light of the national security adviser's talks. The Russian foreign minister's phone calls prepared the ground for a 20-minute phone conversation between Putin and George W. Bush the following day: the Kremlin admitted that the conversation was almost entirely devoted to south Asia.

The Russian defence minister's subsequent briefings to the media party which accompanied him from Moscow to Brussels have been very revealing. He said there was complete understanding among Russia, China and the US on the India-Pakistan situation and that the three countries were acting in concert. Therefore, Mishra's discussions in Moscow were not Russia-centric. They influenced the attitudes of everyone who was trying to make peace, including Armitage.

Ivanov also told Russian reporters in Brussels that the south Asian scenario was linked to Musharraf's ability to control the internal situation in Pakistan. It was an acknowledgement that the military crisis was the direct result of Pakistan having become the fountainhead of global terrorism. Ivanov hinted that Russia, China, India and the US were making common cause against this terrorist threat when he hoped al Qaida, the Chechens and the Uighurs of China would not find shelter in Pakistan. For the Vajpayee government, it is the second major gain in the last four years in its efforts to tame Pakistan. Any composite dialogue with Pakistan in future will not have the same structure as before of eight subjects even if those eight subjects may continue to be reiterated in communiqués.

Pace, security and terrorism are no longer bilateral subjects. New Delhi has succeeded in internationalizing this issue. It comes three years after the Vajpayee government's earlier success of making the world accept that the line of control is sacrosanct even if it is not an international border.

WORLD URGED TO MAKE PAK SEE REASON

Vajpayee warns against forcing India's hand

Press Trust of India 16/9 5/1

NEW YORK, Sept. 15. — Prime Minister Mr AB Vajpayee has said India will have to find its own way to achieve its objective if the international community fails to persuade Pakistan to stop cross-border terrorism.

Addressing members of Congress from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut last night, he said India is as determined as the USA has been since 9/11 to secure itself against Pakistan-backed terror in J&K. "If the international community is unable to persuade Pakistan, India will have to find its own ways to achieve its objective," he said. But he expressed the hope that voices of reason from the world community would help persuade Pakistan. Mr Vajpayee reiterated that Islamabad was bent on sabotaging the Assembly polls in Kashmir, due to begin on Monday.

India, he said, had joined the international coalition against terrorism on the conviction that only a global and comprehensive effort would help eliminate this menace. While the coalition has made considerable headway in Afghanistan "a lot more needs to be done further east", he pointed out, referring to Pakistan's border with India. The Prime

9/11 masterminds in Pakistan: PM

NEW YORK, Sept. 15. — Referring to 9/11, Mr Vajpayee expressed concern over the disappearance of those who had hatched the conspiracy, and hinted that they may be in Pakistan. "Where have they gone?" he asked. When it was suggested that they may be in Pakistan, he said, "You know more than me ... you have given the right answer." He then added that he was told by a delegate in Almaty on his recent tour these men had taken shelter in Pakistan. — PTI

Minister squarely blamed Islamabad for continued tension in South Asia because of its failure to go through the promises made by Gen. Musharraf.

Keeping up his attack on Gen. Musharraf, Mr Vajpayee charged him with having "crossed all limits" in uttering lies on Kashmir. "General came to the UN General Assembly and spoke all lies. There is a limit to lying... he crossed that also," the Prime Minister said at a meeting organised by the Indian-American community here yesterday.

He was apparently referring to the General's address on Wednesday when he called the violence in Gujarat a "massacre of Muslims" and charged India with "plotting to rig" J&K polls.

Urging the world not to be misled by Gen. Musharraf's lies, the Prime Minister said

leaders should not forget the death and destruction wrought by terrorists. Attacking the General on his definition of freedom fighters in the context of J&K, Mr Vajpayee said this cannot be the term to describe those who kill innocents including women and children. "Is it (killings) what the freedom fighters should be doing?" he asked. He said infiltration across the LoC had increased despite Pakistan's promises.

Officials scoff at Pak elections, page 4

PM returns fire, says look who's talking

By Chidanand Rajghatta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New York: Rarely quick to anger, India's grandfatherly Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Friday lashed out at Pakistan's military regime, accusing it of adding nuclear blackmail to its quiver of state-sponsored terrorism.

Mr Vajpayee also taunted Gen Pervez Musharraf for questioning India's secular and democratic principles and ridiculed his equating terrorism with freedom struggle, saying Pakistan was promoting a bizarre, blood-soaked version of self-determination.

The Vajpayee fusillade, delivered before the UN General Assembly, was evidently in response to the general's hard-hitting speech on Thursday in which he piled on BJP-led India charges of military hegemony fuelled by religious extremism. Mr Vajpayee's strong response startled the international community and dismayed US officials, and the general impression now is that ties between India and Pakistan have reached a nadir.

Mr Vajpayee reserved a sulfurous personal retort for Gen Musharraf for his description of the upcoming elections in Jammu and Kashmir as a farce. Those who had to adjust voting and counting procedures to win a referendum were ill-placed to lecture others in freedom and democracy, Mr Vajpayee said.

He directly accused Pakistan and its intelligence agency, the ISI, of conducting terrorism in India under nuclear cover. India was determined to end terrorism with "all the means" at its command, he added. In doing so, he also questioned the US reading of the situation in the sub-continent and its indulgence of Pakistan.

Dark threats had been held out that action by India to stamp out cross-border terrorism could provoke a nuclear war. To succumb to such blatant nuclear terrorism would mean forgetting the bitter lessons of the September 11 tragedy, Mr Vajpayee said.

Some of the Prime Minister's questions and barbs were also directed at the international community, including the United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan who, in his address on Thursday, suggested that the



Mr Vajpayee and Mr Bush at the UN in New York on Thursday.

root causes of the problem in Kashmir need to be looked into.

Those who spoke of the underlying or root causes of terrorism offered alibis to terrorists and absolved them of responsibilities for their heinous actions, such as the September 11 attacks on the United States or the December 13 attack on India's parliament, Mr Vajpayee said.

In more generic remarks that still twitted Pakistan, Mr Vajpayee urged the international community to safeguard democratic societies, saying they were far less prone to ideologies based on violence or militarist yearnings, since they did not have their fingers permanently on the trigger of a gun.

Mr Vajpayee also responded to Gen Musharraf's remarks on the events in Gujarat and the rise of Hindu extremism in India. He maintained that India had the second largest Muslim population in the world, more than the number of Muslims in Pakistan, and that non-discrimination and equal respect of all faiths was the signature tune of India's civilisation and culture.

The Indian response came despite a surprising confession from Gen Musharraf at a press conference on Thursday that his hard-hitting UN speech was the language of desperation. The desperation, Gen Musharraf said, was due to India's "failure to reciprocate and respond" to the several initiatives his government had taken to resume a dialogue.

India warns US on Iraq

S Rajagopalan
New York, September 11

INDIA HAS made it clear to the US that it will not support any unilateral military action against Iraq, but will fully back any fresh moves by the UN to force Baghdad to comply with its mandate on weapons inspections.

Two days ahead of the UN General Assembly session, where US President George W. Bush is slated to make out a strong case for action against Iraq, External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha set out the Indian position in clear terms.

Before leaving for New York, Sinha told an interactive session at the Brookings Institution in Washington yesterday that if the UN were to come up with any new guidelines on weapon inspections, India would support the move.

"The only caution that I would suggest at this point in time is that the final resolution should not be made deliberately so impossible that

no country can accept those conditionalities. So there is a need for reason in dealing with this situation," he said.

Sinha, replying to a question from former Congressman Stephen Solarz, also spoke of the need for "credible evidence" that Iraq is in possession of weapons of mass destruction if the doubts in the minds of international community were to be removed.

The Minister is believed to have articulated the Indian position during his discussions with the US leaders, including Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice on Monday.

When the issue was posed to him at a news briefing at the Indian Embassy, Sinha dismissed the talk that Indian opposition to military action against Iraq would cast its shadow on Indo-US relations.

A friendly relationship need not mean a complete identity of views on all issues, he commented.

Neighbourhood relations

The change of guard at the ministry of external affairs has brought a fresh way of conducting business. This is a normal consequence of a changeover, and helps energise the ministry. The current emphasis on our neighbours takes the management of foreign policy back to basics.

It is an old truism that foreign policy begins at the frontiers; that is where prime interest has to be directed. Recently, there has been a feeling among our close neighbours that they have been remote from our concerns. Indian policy has been aimed at global more than regional goals, hinging on our new-found relationship with America. A grand aspiration is all to the good. But neighbours can never be ignored, so the present corrective action towards them is welcome.

Yashwant Sinha has kicked off his stint in the MEA with a series of workmanlike visits within the region. In rapid succession, he has been in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bangladesh. This is an area where our security and other interests are closely involved.

Our ties with each individual country have fluctuated considerably – except with Bhutan, where relations have been a model of equable good neighbourliness. A great deal is happening in these parts that affects us. One must expect that Mr Sinha's visits presage a deliberate strengthening and improvement of understanding in the face of common difficulty.

The manner in which problems next door spill over to affect us needs little highlighting. Sri Lanka's bitter ethnic struggle has only recently occasioned open political conflict in Tamil Nadu of which the consequences are yet to be fully played out. The unfolding peace process in that country is thus of more than ordinary interest to us. It is something that draws us in, like it or not. The

minister's visit rightly directs attention to an issue that requires close understanding between the two countries.

Nor can we ignore the way in which armed insurgency has spilled over from India to complicate the lives of countries on our borders. Bhutan is a case in point. The United Liberation Front of Asom and Bodo groups have had their camps in that country for years.

They have now been joined by a third organisation that also seeks to use Bhutan territory for training and for sanctuary from the pressure of Indian security forces. To remove these groups from the camps what they have established is no easy matter.

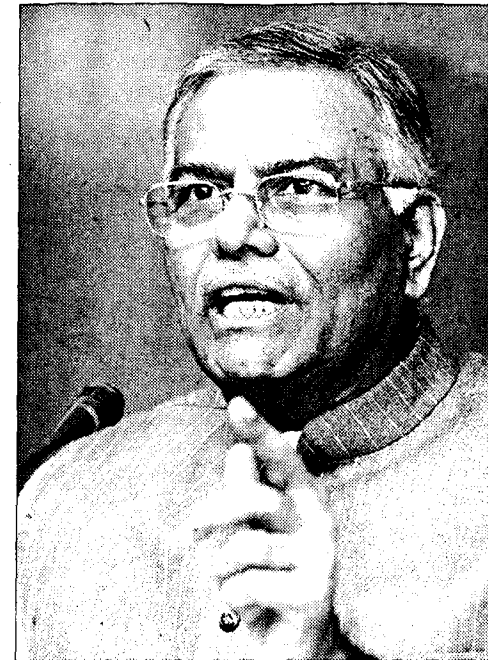
Local Bhutanese people have been involved in some violent incidents instigated by these unwelcome guests, and that has created a great deal of resentment. There are demands for effective policing of the frontier area by India. Conversely, there are quite a few Indian voices raised in a demand for effective action against the camps. It is a difficult problem,

wide angle

SALMAN HAIDAR



Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe with Atal Behari Vajpayee in New Delhi in June. Yashwant Sinha (right) has kicked off his stint in the ministry of external affairs with a series of visits within the region. – AFP



of violent acts in many different parts of the country, including Kathmandu. The state structure itself has come under acute stress from their hammer blows. The Maoists have their links with similar groups in India, which means that close coordination between the two administrations is needed to meet the challenge. The problem is so

serious that military support has been solicited by Nepal from a number of sources, including India, with the result that a considerable international security operation has taken shape.

In an acknowledgement of the urgent need, India has put away its traditional reservations about the entry of external military forces in this contiguous space. In the recent change of government in Bangladesh has brought back a regime with which

our relations have not always been warm. Pakistan's ISI was active in Bangladesh during the last Bangladesh Nationalist Party government, stirring things up in several nearby Indian states.

General Musharraf has been in Dhaka and the fear of a revival of latent security and military links between his country and Bangladesh cannot be dismissed.

But maybe we have all learned something from the experience of the last few years and can make a real bid for more relaxed and friendly ties with this important neighbour. A ministerial visit represents a good start.

Relations with Pakistan are another matter. The minister has been firm and unyielding in all he has said in this subject. There is no give: no surprise, either. This is not a matter for any serious initiative by the MEA alone, especially in the present circumstances when the elections in Kashmir have become part of the diplomatic equation.

Perhaps, in the post-election setting there will be an incentive to take bilateral Indo-Pak relations out of their current deep freeze. At that point, whenever it is attained, the structure of dialogue will once more have to be probed and explored.

Even without Pakistan, there is a plethora of security-related and other issues in the neighbourhood. There is a general perception that these matters require closer, high level attention than they have in fact received.

Hence Mr Sinha's journeys are welcome and place emphasis where it is required. They should bring about better communication with neighbours to tackle problems that have to be jointly faced. A more open and articulate style of functioning should build support for Indian policy both in the region and at home.

(The author is a former Foreign Secretary.)

Musharraf speech not helpful: Sinha

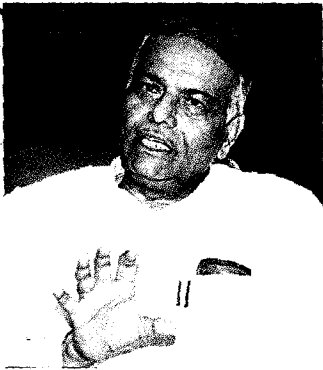
By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, AUG. 19. The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, said today that New Delhi had created conditions for "inclusive elections" in Jammu and Kashmir, but Pakistan was trying to rob these polls of their representative character.

Speaking to *The Hindu* on a wide range of issues at his South Block office, Mr. Sinha said the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf's speech on August 14 had not at all been helpful to the Kashmir polls.

Pointing out that there had not even been a temporary end to infiltration from across the Line of Control (LoC), Mr. Sinha said the role of "outsiders" in the India-Pakistan equation was confined to a "discussion on cross-border terrorism".

"Our firm stand that all the issues between India and Pakistan should be settled through bilateral discussions remains totally undiluted," Mr. Sinha



said while indicating little forward movement on the re-initiation of bilateral contacts.

While conceding that India had to deal with a unipolar world today, Mr. Sinha said that non-alignment still remained a "very relevant" philosophy in international relations. Asked if he was disappointed with the United States' description of Pakistan as a "stalwart ally" in the battle against terrorism, Mr. Sinha said: "We must not forget

that the U.S. woke to the threat of terrorism only after it was directly affected by the events of September 11..."

"Quite clearly, it was only the threat of war between the two neighbours that kindled their (American) interest in this form (affected India) of cross-border terrorism. And, they have done their bit."

Asked about the perception that India and China were competitors in South-East Asia, especially in Myanmar, he replied: "There is no need to look at this as a competition, in competitive terms. There is much to be done that there is enough both for China and India. I think those days are gone when any country could stand up and say this is my sphere of influence..."

Calling for the elimination of trade barriers in South Asia, Mr. Sinha said through his visits to the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and now to Nepal and Bangladesh he was trying to "push for-

ward" the policy of pro-actively engaging India's immediate neighbours.

Asked whether India's request for the extradition of the LTTE chief, Velupillai Prabhakaran, would impinge on the ongoing Sri Lankan peace process, Mr. Sinha said these issues would have to be "kept apart". At this point of time, he said, India had no desire to play "any direct role" in the peace process.

On "observing" elections in Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Sinha said anyone who spoke of the need for external observers did not recognise the strength of the Election Commission and the Indian media.

"We don't need a *New York Times* reporter to come and tell us what is happening in Kashmir because *(The Hindu)* will report more fairly and freely," he added.

Details of the interview: Page 13

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Non-alignment still relevant: Sinha

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, AUG. 19. A relaxed Yashwant Sinha, who took over the job of External Affairs Minister in July, spoke exclusively to The Hindu on a range of foreign policy issues. Excerpts from the interview:

Amit Baruah: What will be your focus in foreign policy issues as External Affairs Minister?

Yashwant Sinha: India's foreign policy has deep roots. It's a policy which was enunciated even before we became an independent country... Because it was a policy evolved during the freedom struggle, it has the backing of national consensus. From time to time, the nuances of foreign policy have been undergoing a change but the basic thrust has remained more or less the same. There have been two developments since the 1990s. One has been the emergence of the so-called unipolar world and the second has been India's acquisition of nuclear capability. Both these have been, from our policy point of view, landmark events...

If we take the first one first, we found that many of the premises of the past changed... in all spheres of international relations not only in strategic and diplo-



INTERVIEW

fered terrorism for a much longer period... the cross-border terrorism that Pakistan was fomenting in Jammu and Kashmir was not an overriding concern.

"India's foreign policy is not and should not be Pakistan-centric".

matic sense, but also very clearly... in the economic sense. We have had to adjust our policies to suit the requirement of these changes. And, we have done it admirably. One very positive outcome has been that, as a result of the realisation both in the U.S. and India, the two democracies need not always be at loggerheads... We have been able to widen and deepen our relationship with the U.S. At the same time, we have not diluted our commitment to the infrastructure of non-alignment. I personally believe that non-alignment is still a very relevant philosophy in international relations because the basic thesis of non-alignment is that we should be able to follow an independent foreign policy... We faced a certain situation which was unfriendly as a result of the nuclear tests. But we have been able to explain the need for going nuclear... Four years down the line one can say that India's case is now much better understood than it initially was immediately following May 1998. So, on both these counts, our policy has been successful... My (foreign policy) focus will be to further strengthen these trends and ensure that we evolve most cordial relations with all our interlocutors in order to safeguard and protect our national interest.

Do you believe there is a sense of disappointment with the U.S. today given the fact they continue to describe Pakistan as a "stalwart ally" in the battle against terrorism?

As I understand (how) the U.S. looks at it, they feel that (General Pervez) Musharraf is a stalwart ally in their fight against terrorism on Pakistan's western border, namely Afghanistan... the U.S. war against terrorism was to eliminate this (Taliban and Al-Qaeda) threat. And there is no doubt that Musharraf has been more than a willing collaborator in this fight. We must also not forget that the U.S. woke to the threat of terrorism only after it was directly affected by the events of September 11. We have suf-

Quite clearly, it is only the threat of war between the two neighbours that has kindled their interest in this form of cross-border terrorism. And, they have done their bit. But as we have always said while we welcome their (U.S.) support this is a battle that we have been fighting and this is a battle we have to fight. So, in that context, the question of hope or disappointment becomes irrelevant.

But you do see our engagement with the U.S. and the rest of the international community as an important tool to put pressure on Pakistan and Gen. Musharraf on the issue of cross-border terrorism?

I have already said on a number of occasions that India's foreign policy is not and should not be Pakistan-centric. We will deal with Pakistan as and when it becomes necessary, but we will not allow Pakistan to dominate our bilateral relationship with any other country. This is a point I, hopefully, made quite clear to my interlocutors who have visited (New Delhi) during the recent past. I think they have gone back convinced that our bilateral relationship with them should be conducted irrespective of what happens in Pakistan. So, if they consider it worth their while to put pressure on Pakistan to desist from cross-border terrorism, fine. Otherwise, as I said, we will deal with the problem.

Your visits to the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Afghanistan and now to Nepal and Bangladesh show a new stress on neighbouring countries. What dividends can Indian foreign policy attain from such a focus?

This is not a new initiative. The initiative is as old as Pandit Nerhu's Asian Relations Conference... being part of Asia our interest in Asia is natural... we have followed a policy of pro-active engagement with our neighbours and I am only trying to push that forward...

On Sri Lanka, we have a pending request for the extradition of the LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran. Do you

believe that this Indian request could impinge on the peace process that is going on?

I find that this issue is good copy for the media. So, whenever you talk of India-Sri Lanka relations, the most important issue that comes to mind is what is happening to the extradition of Prabhakaran. I have already made it clear in Colombo that the request for his extradition is pending. The Sri Lankan Government is aware of it. It's not that they have to be made aware of it again and again. The peace process in Sri Lanka is very important, not only from the point of view of Sri Lanka, but also for the region as a whole. Therefore, we have supported this process and we are happy the peace process is getting underway. These two issues will have to be kept apart and dealt (with) as such.

Is there anything more that India can do to help the peace process along?

I don't think we need to do anything more at the moment except to say that we support the peace process. At this point of time, we have no desire to play any direct role in the peace process.

You are going tomorrow to Nepal for the SAARC Foreign Ministers meeting. At the last summit, there were suggestions for more informal consultations among SAARC leaders. How do you view this?

When the (SAARC) summit takes place, there is also a retreat. Then there is a lot of toing and froing between the various countries, which gives us the opportunity for informal discussions. So, we don't have to formalise the informality...

Given your background as Finance Minister, how do you see the progress on freer trade in South Asia?

Our successes have been very limited so far. Unfortunately, SAARC has not made as much progress on trade and economic cooperation as it should have.

that this is actually a permanent end to infiltration... unfortunately, there is no such evidence. Leave apart a permanent end, there is not even a temporary end because infiltration has not ended. Therefore, this precondition becomes important in terms of Pakistan's own commitment to the international community not to subject India to cross-border terrorism.

If we exclude the bilateral process, outsiders will have a larger role to play in our bilateral relationship with Pakistan...

The role of the outsiders today is confined only to a discussion on cross-border terrorism. We are not discussing any other issue with them. Our firm stand that all the issues between India and Pakistan should be settled through bilateral discussion remains totally undiluted.

India has said it will not allow institutional observers to watch the polls in Jammu and Kashmir, but individuals are free to come. If this election goes off well, will it strengthen India's position on Kashmir?

First of all, we are not allowing anyone. When we issue the visa for India, it does not say excluding Jammu and Kashmir. So anybody who has a visa for India is free to visit wherever he wants... The commitment to free and fair elections is there... in fact, if there is a dilution of that commitment the first people who will talk about it is the Indian media. And, anyone who is talking of the need for external observers, does not recognise the strength of the Election Commission and the Indian media. We don't need a *New York Times* reporter to come and tell us what is happening in Kashmir because (The *Hindu*) will report more fairly and freely.

A point was made by the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, that there was a need to make the Kashmir elections more inclusive. Are you hopeful

"While we welcome their (U.S.) support, this is a battle that we have been fighting and this is a battle we have to fight".

We should quickly implement SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area). We should take it beyond and evolve SAARC as a common tariff area... We should follow the example of developments in other regions and mould SAARC into a kind of economic and strategic bloc that it should be.

To return to the issue of Pakistan, India has taken the position that we will not talk to Islamabad as long as cross-border terrorism continues. Do you believe that a scenario can emerge for some kind of engagement with Pakistan?

There is need to engage Pakistan directly on a range of issues. That position was accepted in the Shimla accord... reiterated in the Lahore declaration and it was under that process that Prime Minister Vajpayee invited Gen. Musharraf to visit India... we are convinced that it is only through a bilateral process of dialogue that we can find a solution to various issues. It is Gen. Musharraf who has given an assurance which has been conveyed to us (by the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage) that Pakistan will put a permanent end to infiltration... and that it will dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism. What is permanent? One day, one week? We need evidence

that non-traditional parties will come into the process?

I can't answer that question positively at this point of time... We think we have created the conditions for inclusive elections and in a democracy that's the surest test of strength. There is no point in people or sections remaining outside the electoral process and claim to represent the people of Jammu and Kashmir... if they have strength, they should demonstrate this in the elections. The only worry here is the interference of Pakistan in the electoral process. The speech of Gen. Musharraf on August 14 has not been helpful at all.

Can you give us an update of talks with Beijing on the border question?

We are furthering our relationship with them in all areas. We have agreed on a process to deal with the border issue and the issue of the Line of Actual Control. That process is going on... naturally, it will take time.

There is a perception in some sections in South-East Asia that India and China are competitors in South-East Asia, especially in Myanmar.

There is no need to look at this as a competition, in competitive terms. There is so much to be done that there is enough both for China and India.

Delhi drive to allay Arabs' Israel fear

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Aug. 13: Foreign minister Yashwant Sinha has called a meeting of Arab ambassadors tomorrow to assure them that India will not support armed action against Iraq and convince them that Delhi's growing ties with Israel are not at the cost of its traditional friends, the Palestinians.

This will be Sinha's first serious interaction with representatives of the Islamic and Arab world.

Though it is part of his policy to build strong relations with countries in India's neighbourhood, he is expected to pay special attention to the Gulf region and the Arab world as it is of vital strategic importance to the nation. It is not only one of the main areas which meets India's energy requirements, it also houses a large number of Indian workers, who send more than \$10 billion back home every year.

This apart, most countries in the region are important members of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, with which Delhi is keen to have good ties.

The issue of Iraq, specially at a time when there are widespread reports that the US is planning to re-launch strikes against Baghdad, and the stalemate in the West Asia peace process are uppermost in the mind of the Arab world. At tomorrow's meeting, Sinha will get the opportunity of clarifying India's



Yashwant Sinha (right) with his Syrian counterpart Farok al-Shara in New Delhi. (Reuters)

stand on both issues. With the BJP in power, there are apprehensions in certain quarters in the Arab world that Delhi might not take as tough a position as it did in 1991 during the Gulf War if the Americans strike Iraq again.

"While the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Iraq should be implemented, their implementation through military methods was not advocated," Sinha told his Syrian counterpart, Farok al-Shara, this afternoon. During an hour-long one-on-one between the two leaders — followed by delegation levels talks — India made it clear that it supported neither the proposed US action against Iraq nor Washington's initiative to replace President Saddam Hussein.

India added that Baghdad was not averse to discussing wi-

th UN secretary general Kofi Annan the issue of sending arms inspectors to Iraq. "Scope for further discussion on this issue exists and military option is not a solution to the problem," foreign ministry spokesperson Nirupama Rao said while briefing reporters about today's meeting.

Delhi did not favour outside intervention in bringing about a change in the Iraqi leadership, she added. "It is an issue which has to be decided by the people of Iraq."

The West Asia imbroglio also came up during the talks between Sinha and al-Shara on upgrading and strengthening bilateral ties. They agreed that resumption of dialogue between the Israelis and Palestinians only could lead to a solution to the problem.

India lobbying for entry into Shanghai group

By Amit Baruah

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NEW DELHI, AUG. 9. India has decided to push for membership of the six-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) irrespective of whether or not Pakistan is granted entry into the China-led SCO.

According to sources, India has been lobbying for entry into the SCO for sometime now and has received support from Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgystan and Tajikistan.

During the recent visit of the Kyrgyz President, Askar Akaev, to New Delhi "both sides" noted the SCO's contribution as a regional organisation. "The Kyrgyz delegation, considering the assertive role that India plays in international and regional relations expressed the view that the participation of India in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation would contribute to the growth of this organisation's potential," a joint press statement said after Mr. Akaev's visit.

According to sources, while India's case

for entry into the SCO has received wide support, Beijing is so far silent on the issue. Given the fact that it is China, which took the lead in the creation of the organisation and all matters relating to it are to be decided by consensus, Beijing's position on India's case could well prove to be the clincher. As is known, Pakistan too is keen on SCO membership.

Given China's close ties with Pakistan, it is highly unlikely that India would gain entry before Pakistan — at best the two may be admitted together.

India, it would appear, has noted the anti-terrorist orientation of the SCO, which is an extension of what was known as the "Shanghai Five" initiative.

At its last summit meeting held in June this year in St. Petersburg, Russia, the SCO denounced terrorist acts.

"The struggle against terrorism has to be conducted on the basis of norms and principles of international law, it must not be identified with the struggle against any religion, countries or nation States, it must be

free from bias and double standards," the June declaration had said.

For its part, India has realised that it is in its interest to be a part of the SCO, an organisation, which has still to realise its potential.

Islamist terrorism is a major concern for all its members. China, for instance, faces separatist forces in Xinjiang province — an issue, which it categorises as terrorism.

India, for its part, has its own concerns about Islamist terrorism; whether it is in Jammu & Kashmir or in the Central Asian region.

Interestingly, the Chinese are confronted with a new situation in Central Asia — that of the long-term presence of American troops in the region in the post-September 11 scenario.

The Chinese were keen that the United States should accept that action against the Xinjiang separatists should be seen as part and parcel of the broader war against terrorism.

That, however, has not happened.

Dealing with the neighbourhood

By K. K. Katyal

To swear by the philosophy of SAARC and yet to be lukewarm to the idea of top-level meetings will not help India.

INDIA HAS a valid point when it says Pakistan's obstructive approach to concrete action plans on economic matters impairs the utility of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Or that the grouping would have been an effective instrument for cooperation in the region, had Islamabad not dragged its feet on the South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) and on the next-stage objective, a free trade area. Frustration is inevitable in New Delhi, when it sees session after session making little progress on this matter. But could the lack of progress on any issue — even a core subject such as economic cooperation — be used to justify India's non-participation in its summits? This is the meaning of the stand taken by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee (in his address to the Commanders' Conference) — in the wake of indications by the official spokesperson, linking India's attendance to the next summit at Islamabad to perceptible advance on economic cooperation.

It does not befit Pakistan to make a grievance of the Indian line — after having systematically undermined the functioning of SAARC. By now, Pakistan has refined its logic in support of its decision, taken after due deliberation, not to go ahead with economic ties with India — "cooperation in this field is not possible unless a conducive atmosphere is created, after resolving the core issue of Kashmir", is the main argument. It proclaims from the rooftops, as it were, that there is no point warming up on the economic front, unless political concerns are addressed.

Islamabad's stand has meant a freeze in SAARC's affairs. But has India advanced the cause of cooperation in South Asia by what is perceived by others as a negative approach? Both these dimensions need to be examined.

Pakistan does not mind cutting its nose to spite its face. For some strange reason, it has convinced itself that a close economic relationship will work to India's advantage. What better way to cause harm to India than not having these ties? It does not mind the loss of revenue, caused by "informal trade", a respectable

name for smuggling via Dubai and other places. Over the years, the ruling establishment there, irrespective of its composition and complexion, has worked up public opinion so intensely that it reacts sharply to even a slight show of official moderation. Some time ago, a senior official in Islamabad drew attention to a routine point that, under the WTO regime, Pakistan had to accord India the most-favoured nation (MFN) status. This led to a shrill chorus of protests, with shrieking headlines in newspapers about a "sell-out", and an "unpardonable departure" from a cherished policy. The Urdu papers translated the MFN in words which, when retranslated into English, meant a plea to treat India as a "highly likeable country". This was enough to inflame the public sentiment and the poor official was shunted out. His only sin was to draw attention to the stand and norms in international economic dealings. It was forgotten that India had already accorded MFN status to Pakistan which had to reciprocate under the mandatory dos and don'ts of the WTO.

However, it is India that attracts the criticism of other member-countries: they make no secret of their disapproval of New Delhi's approach and this, in turn, helps Pakistan claim them as its supporters. Then there is the growing unease over the manner in which SAARC became a hostage to India-Pakistan antagonism. That feeling is not without basis, as would be evident from the proceedings of the summits and of the meetings at lower levels. The controversies on the scope of the SAARC could also be ascribed to this factor. On the trade issue, it was Pakistan's intransigence that was responsible, as already mentioned, for the association's failure to make any headway towards SAPTA, what to say of the goal of the free trade arrangement. Yet, that is not the perception of others. On the contrary, India is blamed for its negativism. The impa-

tience with the slow advance of the SAARC helps Pakistan gain the sympathy of others for its plea for amending the Charter's provision which bars discussion of bilateral and contentious issues. It is a wholesome stipulation, meant to ensure that the association does not get bogged in wrangles over bilateral problems, of which there was no dearth. Here again New Delhi's stand is not appreciated. Had that not been the case, Pakistan's plea that the Charter be expanded to include security matters and to give the association a role to sort out bilateral issues would not have found sympathy. The 1998 nuclear tests by India and Pakistan deepened the sense of insecurity among other countries of the region, leading to demands that the SAARC be required to take cognisance of the changed situation. Pakistan backed their stand, among other factors, to embarrass India. Did New Delhi put up a coherent response? Cases such as this add to the misperception about India.

India, as is often noted, has land or maritime borders with one or the other member-country while none of them has this commonality. The border is, generally, a source of trouble and acrimony. The geography has placed India in an unenviable position and, in the process, gives it a bad image. This calls for extra efforts by New Delhi to correct any misperception. India's neighbourhood policy is marked by a strong imbalance — obsession with Pakistan and lack of adequate attention to others in the region. This produces sharp reactions and causes annoyance, adding to India's handicap, caused by physical asymmetry.

This situation called for extra care by India to ensure that unnecessary misgivings are not caused — of course without any deviation from principles. In practice, New Delhi's action served to strengthen the suspicions of others, giving Pakistan an opportunity to exploit the situation.

Some three years ago, India chose not to take part in the summit which, as it turned out, was scheduled to be held some two months after the military coup in Pakistan. Fair enough. But was there a justification in prolonging the boycott to two years?

Now again, New Delhi does not seem in a mood to take part in the next summit to be held in Islamabad. Two reasons are adduced — one officially, the other unofficially. The official reason, as already mentioned, arises out of Pakistan's persistent prevarication on specific measures for economic cooperation. The other factor — uncertainty about the political situation in Pakistan, where it has not been possible to form a "democratic" Government three weeks after the election.

In case India has developed reservations about the efficacy or the utility of SAARC, let it be stated explicitly. Let the focus shift to deepening and expanding relationship in the neighbourhood on a bilateral basis or to growth triangles and quadrangles. If not, care needs to be taken to see that permanent damage is not done to the institution because of momentary pique or a crisis at a particular point of time. The problem now has arisen because Pakistan is to host the summit at a time when its relationship with India is far from normal. As is known, New Delhi is not prepared to talk to Pakistan unless it acts on its assurances to take effective steps to put an end to infiltration of terrorists. India has resisted exhortations from other countries to resume dialogue until this requirement is fulfilled. Obviously, New Delhi feels Mr. Vajpayee's stay in Islamabad would become an occasion for stepped-up pressures from the world community. Assuming that there is merit in India's reluctance, the correct course will be to suggest new dates for the summit. To swear by the philosophy of SAARC and yet to be lukewarm to the idea of top-level meetings will not help India. It would add to suspicions in the neighbourhood — at a time when New Delhi has to reckon with challenges in its bilateral dealings with the countries in the region, other than Pakistan.

'Pakistan needs to be disciplined'

External Affairs minister Yashwant Sinha on Pakistan, the war against terror and relations with the US

Saurabh Shukla
New Delhi

It may not seem that long, but Yashwant Sinha has just completed hundred days in South Block. In his first interview on the eve of completion of three years by the NDA government, Sinha says Pakistan needs to be disciplined if the global war against terrorism is to be won. Excerpt:

You have just completed a hundred days in the foreign office. How was it?

There are three elements of diplomacy that I want to take forward. There is the ethnic element of diplomacy, economic element and the democratic element. Democratic content of our relationships has to be brought forth. Whenever possible there have been exchanges between parliaments. It does make a difference vis-a-vis Pakistan. We also have to make use of the emerging political clout of the NRIs and the Persons of Indian Origin. We are working on a 'Pravasi Bhartiya Divas' in January. The clout of Indian professionals abroad will be an important input in our foreign policy.

What is your impression of the image of India based on your discussions with world leaders?

The (recent) international conferences in New York, Copenhagen, and Johannesburg allowed me to meet many Foreign Ministers. One of the advantages we have is that Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee is recognised as a statesman. I saw it during his meetings with President Bush and Prime Minister Blair. Then there is India's economic strength, which is clearly an asset.

Now, we talk of a two-way traffic even for investment proposals. Times have changed. Also, the strategic im-

portance of India has been realised. You have to listen to what India says, India cannot be taken lightly. India's image has undergone a change, and for the better.

Cross-border terrorism remains one of the biggest challenges. All that you are left with are the empty promises by General Musharraf which were never fulfilled. Aren't you worried?

We didn't ask the global community for a promise. We didn't appeal to the Americans to get us a promise. It was Richard Armitage who conveyed General Musharraf's promise. Cross-border terrorism is still continuing. If Musharraf has gone back on his promises, then the international community should take note of it. They should deal with him as he made a promise to them. We are in dialogue with them. To the extent they can discipline Musharraf is fine, the rest is our problem and we will deal with him.

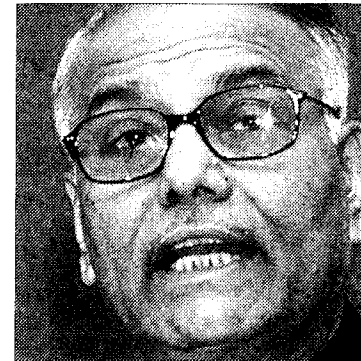
How do you plan to deal with him?

We do have a strategy to deal with terrorism and things are under control. If Pakistan was allowed to have its way, things would have been much worse. We dealt with Pakistan-supported terrorism in Punjab and we won. We had a successful Jammu and Kashmir election. Clearly, India is winning the war against terrorism.

But there's a view that Indian diplomacy has not worked well against Pakistan.

I would say India has an upper hand today, on the ground and in the diplomatic arena. You think of, any one - Japan, EU, G-8. In the last few months you see the statements coming from them that have held Pakistan responsible for promoting cross-border terrorism. Therefore the achievements of Indian diplomacy should not

Times have changed. Also, the strategic importance of India has been realised. You have to listen to what India says, India cannot be taken lightly. Its image has undergone a change, and for the better.



INTERVIEW OF THE WEEK YASHWANT SINHA

be minimised. In the past, the Western powers tended to tilt towards Pakistan; the tilt has gone.

But what about double standards adopted by these countries? For instance, in the case of clandestine Pakistani nuclear support to North Korea, the US Secretary of State Collin Powell almost gave a clean chit to Pakistan.

We have to be pragmatic. We make our judgements, they make theirs. The basic principle is that we will do things in our national interest and they will in theirs. We cannot expect them to do things that are not in their national interest. As long as we realise this basic principle we will not be under any illusion.

An impression is gaining ground that the decision to withdraw our forces from the border and de-escalate was taken under pressure.

Somewhere deep down we have this

misconception that we do things under orders from someone. The simple fact that we are capable of taking our own decision is not recognised. This decision was taken entirely by the Government.

Of course, the whole world has been telling us to de-escalate since Agra, but there is no question of India acting under pressure. It's not a question of this Government or that Government, it's about national prestige.

By saying we have acted under pressure, we are diminishing our national prestige. Why say we have acted under pressure from the US, why not Japan or Austria?

Are we contemplating any more de-escalatory steps such as restoring transport links between India and Pakistan and restoring full diplomatic status?

That will be as and when the situation arises. It will not be fair for me to comment on it at this stage.

If Pakistan was allowed to have its way, things would have been much worse. We dealt with Pakistan-supported terrorism in Punjab... We had a successful J&K election. Clearly, India is winning the war against terrorism

On Indo-US ties, where do you think they are headed?

We are trying to build on our commonality. We are trying to give a new dimension to our relationship. It has several components.

Military to military co-operation, there is co-operation in civilian nuclear technology, and even in areas like dual use technology we are settling our differences. There is a growing economic component of the relationship.

Our views converge on international issues and I see the building of a strategic relationship with the US. This is the direction both Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the US President, George W Bush are working in.

Moving to Afghanistan, are you concerned at the resurgence of the pro-Taliban elements in Afghanistan?

We are not present in Afghanistan militarily, others are. They have to keep the dangers in mind. We have shared our information with them. There is a real danger of pro-Taliban elements trying to 'come back to power and these concerns have to be met effectively.

Do you think that steps being taken at the global level address India's concerns on terrorism?

Unfortunately, at the international level, countries which are directly affected by terrorism are on one side and on the other are those who are not affected. They don't realise that it is just a question of time before it catches up with them.

When did we suggest a Comprehensive Convention on terrorism? It was in 1997, four years before September 11. The convention is still being discussed at the United Nations. We'll have to work together to strengthen the fight against terrorism, setting aside all differences.

Can they really fight terrorism with Pakistan as an ally?

Our view is that countries like Pakistan need to be disciplined, (otherwise) the war against terrorism will be incomplete.

The world may not realise it today, but it will tomorrow.

Incidents like Gujarat have lowered India's image abroad. Don't you feel that the statements made by some people dilute India's diplomatic war against religious fundamentalism and terrorism?

Every interlocutor who comes here has to realise that India is a democracy. Why only Sangh parivar, lots of people are saying a lot of things. What matters is the attitude, and policies of the government and national consensus.

People who get worried about such statements suffer from amnesia. They forget the fact that India is a democracy with freedom of expression. If such a thing would have happened in their own country, they wouldn't have been worried.

27 OCT 2002

New MEA spokesman

By Our Diplomatic
Correspondent

19/10
40-11
NEW DELHI, OCT. 16. Navtej Sarna, a 1980 Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer, took over as Joint Secretary (External Publicity) from Nirupama Rao today. Mrs. Rao, who has moved to the External Affairs Ministry as Additional Secretary

(Administration) on promotion, handled the job of spokesperson at a delicate stage in India's foreign relations. Mr. Sarna, whose last posting was Minister (Press) in the Indian Embassy in Washington, has worked in various diplomatic capacities in Tehran, Thimpu, Warsaw, Moscow and at the Permanent Mission of India to the U.N.

India adopts wait-and-watch policy on North Korea

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, OCT. 25. A close watch is being maintained on developments relating to the clandestine acquisition of nuclear weapons technology by North Korea allegedly through its close ties with Pakistan.

Official sources told this correspondent that India was looking at the statements emanating from Washington, Tokyo and Seoul before deciding whether or not it should intervene in the whole affair. It was still not clear what the United States proposed to do with North Korea and whether it would introduce Pakistan into the equation, the sources added.

"This time, the fissile material was highly enriched uranium which the U.S. suspects is being produced with gas centrifuge technology provided by Pakistan," a commentary in the *International Herald Tribune* said on Thursday.

While the U.S. attitude towards Pakistan fits into its overall "soft approach" to Islamabad and Gen. Pervez Musharraf after September 11, what it does with North Korea remains to be seen. Here, observers are positing North Korea against Iraq given the fact that both countries are part of the "axis of evil". From the Indian standpoint, the concern is obviously Pakistan.

After the Ghauri missile test in April 1998, the U.S., under the then President, Bill Clinton, imposed sanctions against Abdul Qadeer Khan's KRL outfit and the North

Korean Changgwang Sinyong Corporation on May 4, 1998. In 1999, an American press report, quoting a U.S. Department of Energy report, estimated that North Korea was at least six years away from the production of highly-enriched uranium. However, the report claimed that with significant technical support from other countries such as Pakistan, the time-frame could be decreased by several years. As far as North Korea is concerned, it is said to have offered a "non-aggression treaty" with the U.S. as Washington explored ways and means to deal with the North Korean nuclear weapons programme.

"The DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) considers that it is a reasonable and realistic solution to the nuclear issue to conclude a non-aggression treaty between the DPRK and the US if the grave situation of the Korean peninsula is to be bridged over," the North Korean news agency, KCNA, reported today.

Given the fact that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is one of the top concerns of the U.S. globally and in relation to Iraq, world capitals are watching whether Washington will use the carrot or the big stick with Pyongyang.

Writing in *The Washington Post* of October 24, commentator Jim Hoagland said: "The discovery that North Korea has been secretly enriching uranium for the nuclear weapons programme it promised to freeze in 1994 demonstrates the dangers of put-

ting faith in a confirmed and practiced liar. So does the news that Pakistan provided the nuclear technology and, perhaps, uranium to King Jong Il's regime.

"Pakistan's role as a clandestine supplier shatters the Bush administration's efforts to paint that country as a flawed but well-meaning member of the coalition against terror. Pakistan today is the most dangerous place on Earth, in large part because the administration does not understand the forces it is dealing with there and has no policy to contain them," Mr. Hoagland wrote.

"Pervez Musharraf's Pakistan is a base from which nuclear technology, fundamentalist terrorism and life-destroying heroin are spread around the globe. American and French citizens and Christians of any nationality, including Pakistanis, are indiscriminately slaughtered by fanatics as the occasion arises. This nuclear-armed country is in part ungoverned, in part ungovernable," he said.

"The past provides no reason to hope that Musharraf is telling the truth about not helping North Korea now, either. He has paid no price for lying to (the U.S. Secretary of State) Colin Powell about ending terrorism in Kashmir or about cooperating fully in crushing the Al-Qaeda. The only consequences for duplicity have been rewards and protection. Why in the world would he suddenly change an approach that is working on every level for him."

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EU snub on Pak eclipses all gains

KAMLENDRA KANWAR
CHENNAI, OCTOBER 18

PRIME MINISTER Vajpayee's week-long visit to Cyprus, Denmark and UK can hardly be described as an unmitigated diplomatic success. It does not speak well of our diplomacy taken by surprise as we were by the EU's refusal to explicitly mention Pakistani cross-border terrorism in the joint statement issued at the end of the summit.

That this statement had been discussed for weeks as the External Affairs Minister told accompanying media made the exclusion even more difficult to justify. The abrasive manner in which the Danish PM and European Council President Anders Fogh Rasmussen, virtually commanded India to resume dialogue with Islamabad showed that the latest Indian projection on J-K had not worked. Clearly, Rasmussen went overboard and had to eat the humble pie the next day in the face of pressure from other EU nations and India, but the chill in ties with Denmark could hardly be concealed.

There was a world of difference between Vajpayee's tense look at the Copenhagen press conference and his demeanour at the dinner hosted by the Indian High Commission in London.

It was indeed a tragedy that the convergence of the EU and India on economic cooperation was completely overshadowed by irritants on the Kashmir issue. If any efforts were made by the

By crying wolf over Pak-supported terrorism, are we not unwittingly lending credibility to the Pakistani propaganda that Kashmir is not a bilateral issue but an international issue?

Let's face it, we are leagues ahead of Pakistan now in economic strength. Should we not then be negotiating with countries from a position of strength?

Doesn't our insistence on Pakistan's condemnation not dilute the economic muscle we have acquired with a market of upwardly mobile people that is larger than the population of entire Europe?

If there were gains made in Copenhagen in the economic summit prior to the political one, it was as much a product of the aggressive marketing by CII and FICCI as the result of the refreshingly pragmatic approach of Disinvestment Minister Arun Shourie. Sensibly, in Cyprus at least, the

refrain of the Indians was clearly economic. President Clerides did condemn Pakistani cross-border terrorism but the joint statement skirted the issue. Yet, no fuss was made by the Indian team on the nuances of Cyprus' response.

In London, like in Copenhagen, economic cooperation seemed to have taken a back seat. Yet, it was sweet music to our ears to hear the British PM endorse India's stand on cross-border terrorism.

There can be little doubt that this hardening of British attitude towards Pakistan and the EU Council President's volte face on cross-border terrorism were the result of the perception of India's growing economic stature.

It is this that we must capitalise on. As for Pakistan, we must make it clear to the international community that we are capable of dealing with it on our own.



External Affairs Ministry to shift the focus from the political failure to the economic success, they were too feeble to have any credibility.

It is worth pondering whether this country should lay so much emphasis on condemnation of Pakistani involvement in terrorism and thereby show itself up as a weakling or whether it should adopt a more confident demeanor by hard-selling its new economic strength.

VAJPAYEE'S

EU VISIT

Vajpayee, EU speak in one voice on Pak

BHARAT BHUSHAN

London, Oct. 12: The elections in Pakistan were flawed and their results pre-determined, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee told his British counterpart here.

Vajpayee, who met Tony Blair at Chequers, the country residence of the British Prime Minister, expressed concern over the electoral victory of extremist Islamic parties in two Pakistani provinces (Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province) bordering Afghanistan.

He expressed the apprehension that Islamic extremists in Afghanistan could regroup and reorganise themselves.

India's assessment, Vajpayee said, was that these extremist forces could not have emerged without the encouragement of the government of Pakistan. Indian external affairs minister Yashwant Sinha, briefing reporters after the Chequers meeting, said: "Prime Minister Vajpayee told the British Prime Minister that the elections were flawed ab initio."

With the final results almost announced, the alliance of religious parties, the Muthahidda Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), is set to form its government in the North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. At the national level, no single party has got majority and indications are that after intense political jockeying, a pro-Pervez Musharraf coalition would form the government at the Centre.

Till this evening, the MMA had secured 50 of the 272 constituency seats in the National Assembly, the Pakistan Muslim

League (QA), loyal to Musharraf, 78, and Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party Parliamentary 62. Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League faction has got only 15.

The European Union also criticised the elections, saying they were "seriously flawed" due to interference by the state machinery. Observers from the EU issued a damning report on the poll, slamming the authorities for using state resources to back particular parties and changing the constitution so that the military retained ultimate power.

The British Prime Minister congratulated Vajpayee on the successful conclusion of the elections in Jammu and Kashmir. Blair apparently said that he thought they were free and fair although unfortunately they were marred by violence.

The British Prime Minister, unlike the European Union, endorsed the Indian position that a dialogue with Pakistan could not go hand in hand with cross-border terrorism. Blair did not make any attempt to advise India to start a dialogue with Pakistan. He emphasised the need to end cross-border terrorism to create a conducive atmosphere for a dialogue.

Blair briefed Vajpayee on the discussions he has had with other world leaders on Iraq. Vajpayee made it clear that India was in favour of a multilateral approach to resolving the issue. While India wanted Iraq to comply fully and effectively with the UN resolutions and allow weapons inspectors full access, Vajpayee told Blair that whatever had to be done must be done under the aegis of the United Nations.

Pages 2 and 7

THE TELEGRAPH

India, EU jostle on Kashmir

By Dina Vakil
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Copenhagen: Differences between India and the European Union on Kashmir set off a frisson on Thursday at the conclusion of the third India-EU summit here, even as the two sides professed satisfaction with their determination to expand and deepen the political, trade and economic dialogue.

The variance in positions between the two sides turned on the EU's reluctance to include mention of Pakistan's role in pursuing cross-border terrorism in the joint statement, which India had sought. Instead, the 15-member group urged India to resume direct talks with its neighbour and called for the de-escalation of tensions in Kashmir and for a dialogue that would include "all stakeholders" in the state.

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The EU position, spelt out in unusually sharp tenor by the Prime Minister of Denmark, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, against the backdrop of Thursday's election returns in Jammu & Kashmir, caught the Indian delegation off-guard. Foreign minister Yashwant Sinha even called an impromptu press meet to brief Indian journalists accompanying the Prime Minister on the contentious behind-the-scenes discussions on the Kashmir issue.

Referring to an interview to this paper by European Commissioner for External Relations Chris Patten, in which the feisty former governor of Hong Kong had urged India to jettison the narrow "prism of Pakistan" in favour of a wider world-view "like that of China", Mr Sinha said that he had conveyed the view that the EU itself should not look at the world through Pakistan's prism.

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Kashmir will top PM's talks during 3-nation tour

By Amit Baruah

NICOSIA (CYPRUS), OCT. 7. Success can throw up new challenges. That's exactly what has happened after the credible conduct of elections to the Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly. As the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, arrived in Nicosia for a week-long, three-country tour, Kashmir will be a top priority when he sits down for the India-European Union Summit on October 10 in Copenhagen and a week-end meeting with the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair.

By all accounts, there has been a credible, free and fair election in Kashmir. The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, said in New Delhi not so long ago that a credible election in Kashmir could be a first step in redressing the grievances of the people of Kashmir.

The first step has been taken by India. Now, the challenge for Mr. Vajpayee and his foreign policy team is to ensure that they "sell" the elections to the international community in a perspective that leads to maximum gains for India. The second step for the international community will be the elections in Pakistan and the formation of an "elected" Government in Islamabad. For its part, India has openly questioned the democratic character of these elections — but that possibly has more to do with the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, calling the elections in Kashmir a "sham".

As far as India is concerned, the credible elections in Jammu and Kashmir can have long-term meaning only if the American-

led international community puts greater pressure on Pakistan to see reason and end the dispatch of "jehadi terrorists" into Kashmir and other parts of India. New Delhi must make the best use of the fact that a far more representative Government, than what came about through the last polls in 1996, will take power in Srinagar. Whatever the character of the Government, there will be an effective Opposition to raise uncomfortable questions for those who wield power.

Mr. Vajpayee must tell the Danish Presidency of the European Union, the Danish Prime Minister, Andres Rasmussen, and the European Commission President, Romano Prodi, that the elections are a sign of Kashmiri participation in the political process. The same message must go out to Tony Blair.

From here on, the Prime Minister can make one of two choices — or even combine the two — the Kashmir elections can lead to a dialogue with Pakistan or India can seriously address the issues of autonomy and political rights of the Kashmiris within the Indian Union.

Twelve years after militancy began in Kashmir, India has a new chance to turn things around. Whatever the issues India has with the international community over Pakistan, the fact remains that America and the West played a crucial role in "softening" up the separatist elements. The West does see the elections as a positive development.

Now, how does India take the process

forward? If the jihadis are allowed to play around by Pakistan, the new Government in Srinagar will be a definite target. That's the challenge for Mr. Vajpayee and his Government, which often tends to pull in different directions as far as Kashmir and Pakistan are concerned.

The lack of consistency in dealing with Pakistan is likely to continue. As one commentator put it in a different context recently, it's important to see what India does rather than what it says.

India, which will surely press its case with the European and British leadership on the question of Pakistan and its support for cross-border terrorism, must tell its interlocutors that it will move ahead on Kashmir with or without Pakistan.

As it tackles the terrorists on the ground, India must tell the world that it will talk to the elected leadership in Srinagar on restoring the rights of the Kashmiri people through a credible and serious process. Other players may also find a place.

Dialogue for the sake of dialogue or to reassure the international community that tensions are down will not yield much. India's concerns about Pakistan and its support for terrorism remain valid. In such an environment, commencing a dialogue on issues other than terrorism could prove problematic.

But, Mr. Vajpayee and India have a chance to bring the international community around provided they address the Kashmir issue internally. Will the Government put its political act together to do so?

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Delhi focus on Kashmir devolution

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Nicosia (Cyprus), Oct. 7: Now that the elections in Jammu and Kashmir are virtually over, India will tell the world they represent a credible expression of the people's will and the international community should accept that.

That the people of Jammu and Kashmir have rejected violence and shown their faith in democracy is going to be the key message that Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to the European leaders he would meet during his week-long sojourn to Cyprus, Denmark and Britain.

A senior official source said that once the internal situation in Jammu and Kashmir stabilises, Delhi would begin a serious dialogue on devolution of powers with the newly elected state government. He said that if things go well, an attempt would be made to settle the devolution issue by May next year.

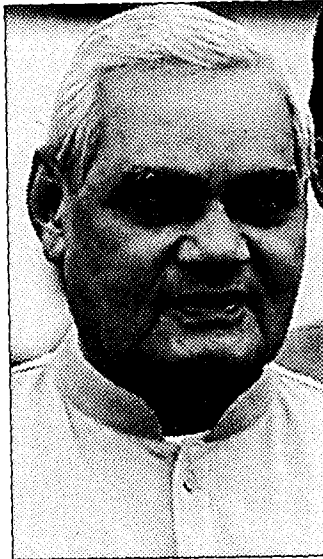
The elections in Pakistan, the official said, had already been fixed. They could not, therefore, be compared with those held in Jammu and Kashmir.

Setting the tone for his message to the international community, Vajpayee told an NRI gathering in the Cypriot capital that there was no question of India giving up Kashmir. "Such a question does not arise because Kashmir is linked to our very existence (as a secular nation). And, in this, we have the consent of the people of Kashmir. No force has been used," he said.

Those who thought that India would get tired and would give up Kashmir had been given a fitting reply by the people through the Assembly elections, Vajpayee added.

The Prime Minister said India had taken the "wishes of the Kashmiri people" into account through the elections. "But ask General Musharraf whose wishes were involved in his becoming President? He did not ask anyone before anointing himself," Vajpayee said.

Pakistan, he said is not a democratic country and has no respect for democracy. "I used to be the leader of the Opposition but today I am the Prime Minister. In Pakistan, the leader of the Opposition is in exile. Neither Benazir Bhutto nor Nawaz Sharif can participate in elections despite wanting to do so. The world has not seen such a



Vajpayee in Cyprus. (AFP)

dictatorship. This cannot last long," Vajpayee said.

The official source said that no clear answer could be expected on any timetable for the withdrawal of the Indian armed forces from the border as "all options were open" even now. He ruled out any talks with General Pervez Musharraf -- unless the international community came down heavily on Pakistan.

"We have always said that if Pakistan ends cross-border terrorism, we will offer it a dialogue on all issues including Kashmir," the official said.

However, he added that the movement on one issue should not be allowed to affect the progress on others.

The Prime Minister, who arrived here this afternoon, is expected to hold discussions with President Glafcos Clerides tomorrow. Five agreements are likely to be signed, concerning co-operation in information technology and services, public health and medical sciences, science and technology, posts and telecom and revival of cultural exchange.

Vajpayee is the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Cyprus after Indira Gandhi who visited the island in 1983.

Vajpayee's visit comes at a crucial juncture in the history of Cyprus when it is engaged in direct talks with the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (which India does not recognise) and when it is poised to join the European Union. Cyprus has supported India fully in condemning terrorism and cross-border terrorism.

8 OCT 2002

...the bodies from the terrorists in the city on Sunday.

India may not oppose action against Iraq if backed by UN

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

9-f focus (11-12) 1/10

New Delhi: India is unlikely to oppose "armed action against Iraq" if the use of force is mandated by the United Nations.

Though the earlier Indian position was that it had "consistently opposed armed action against Iraq as it is counter-productive and only serves to aggravate the sufferings of the Iraqi people," India is unlikely to reiterate this position if the UN authorises use of force.

Acceptance of the changed situation has been made easier by the US decision to put the issue of a regime change on the backburner.

Though the details of the UN resolution—whether it would be two part as suggested by French President Jacques Chirac—and on the timeframe set for enforcement was still being debated, official sources said the government was already making contingency plans.

Explaining that the earlier opposition to the use of armed action was to the use of "unilateral force by the US", the official sources pointed out that any Indian opposition at this stage mattered little since the issue was before the UN.

India is not only outside the scope of the debate, which is centred on the permanent members of the Security Council with some engagement with some Western and Arab countries, it sees little to be gained in airing any opposition to a fait accompli. Therefore,

despite Indian scepticism about the "evidence" provided by the US and the UK, it was unlikely to take any public posture during the ongoing debate, the sources said.

A pointer to this change was the deft juggling exhibited in the Prime Minister's recent statement during a press conference in New York where he spoke of India's "historical relationship with Iraq" but expressed understanding of "the international community's desire to see the relevant UN resolutions on weapons of mass destruction complied with fully".

Absent from the response was any mention of India's opposition to the use of armed force. The official sources said the government had now begun calculating the immediate and long-term costs of a possible invasion.

The main issues confronting the government at this stage is the possibility of an increase in the oil import bill and a temporary disruption of supplies. In the longer run, trade with Iraq is likely to cease completely in the eventuality of a strike and the oil-for-food programme may also be held in abeyance, endangering the contracts of Indian companies.

India is currently one of the top six countries from which Iraq sources its needs. Indian companies received orders worth \$ 1 billion from 1998 and were expecting another \$ 500 million this year with electrical items, wheat and tea accounting for the bulk of the orders.

Indian diplomacy runs aground

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 28. India's diplomatic efforts to ostracise Pakistan in the post-September 11 context with the help of the American-led international community have run aground.

Given the fact that India's approach to Pakistan stems from a domestic problem — that of State-abetted terrorism from across the border — these diplomatic efforts are rooted in what happens within the country. In that sense, these efforts were aimed at producing results in dealing with terrorism.

While there is little doubt that the international community often uses the Indian phraseology in the context of Pakistan, India has not gained in its own war against terrorism.

New Delhi which used both "coercion" and "coercive diplomacy" against Pakistan after the high-profile terrorist attacks in the country last year, including that against Parliament on December 13, has not been able to push Pakistan into a diplomatic corner.

Instead, Indian policy-makers would have taken note of the warm words used by the United States President, George W. Bush, to describe Pakistan while

formally receiving Islamabad's new Ambassador to Washington.

Words by themselves do not mean much — and dialogue which does not lead to diplomatic gains becomes an end in itself. This is not to downplay India's successes in presenting the "terrorist" case against Pakistan.

But, if a cost-benefit analysis is carried out post-September 11, Pakistan is the clear gainer as far as its renewed cosiness towards the U.S. and the rest of the world is concerned.

In February 2000, when the then American President, Bill Clinton, spent five days in India and five hours in Pakistan, Islamabad was perilously perched as a near-ostracised nation.

Today, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, whose hand Mr. Clinton did not want to be seen shaking in public, is a valued interlocutor for Mr. Bush. And, all this because Pakistan is co-operating in nabbing Al-Qaeda operatives and handing them over to the U.S.

Mr. Bush's administration does view India positively, but is not in a position to antagonise Pakistan as a crucial ally in the campaign to arrest Islamists from that country.

The tough words used by New Delhi after the October 1 attack on the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly and that on Parliament are worth recalling as evidence of the BJP-led Government's intentions.

"India cannot accept such manifestation of hate and terror from across the border. There is a limit to India's patience," the External Affairs Ministry said following a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security on October 1.

"Our fight (against terrorism) is now reaching the last stage, and a decisive battle would have to take place. The entire country is united in this hour of crisis," the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, said on December 13. A Cabinet resolution the same day promised to "liquidate" the terrorists — wherever and whoever they were.

Today, terrorism continues to rear its head in the country and Pakistan appears to be diplomatically strengthened. The latest statements emanating from Gen. Musharraf can only go to confirm such a view.

The international community, for the moment, has staved off the possibility of a conflict between India and Pakistan. Increasingly, politicians and offi-

cial are taking the view that India must fight its own battles.

Given the obvious limits of Indian diplomatic and coercive efforts, New Delhi may, perhaps, think in terms of a changing tack. If Pakistan wants to engage India, it is time to directly test Islamabad's intentions on terrorism. In the recent past, India has expressed its readiness to engage Pakistan bilaterally on terrorism. New Delhi must now make this offer through diplomatic channels and then make it public.

If Pakistan rejects such an offer (given the fact that officially Pakistan always denies helping terrorist elements), New Delhi can at least say we did our best to engage Islamabad on the issue. Then it can also point to the "effective cooperation" between Pakistan and the U.S. on terrorists of concern to Washington.

Given the fact that there is not much forward movement on other tracks, will India be willing to try a bilateral approach? Or are political sensitivities too serious a hurdle to allow for a serious, diplomatic effort at engagement backed up by documentation on Pakistan's terrorist lineage?

29 SEP 2003

HINDU

Atal solution to diplomat row

K.P. NAVAR (V8)

Washington, Sept. 26: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has found a way around the dispute between the US state department and the Indian embassy in Washington over the accreditation of B.K. Agnihotri as a diplomat here with the rank of ambassador.

Vajpayee has directed Agnihotri to be part of India's permanent mission to the UN instead of the embassy in Washington.

Agnihotri, who holds the long-winded title of India's ambassador-at-large for Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) and Non-resident Indians (NRI), will now be accredited to the UN in New York.

The change in arrangements for his accreditation is expected to put an end to the long-running controversy surrounding his diplomatic status in the US, in which South Block has been perceived by the political leadership in New Delhi as having been unhelpful to the Prime Minister's choice of the special envoy.

The babudom in the ministry of external affairs generally resents outsiders and considers diplomatic postings to be the right of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS).

But in standing by Agnihotri and finding an amicable solution to his problem, Vajpayee will earn praise from all those in the country's diplomatic network

who are outside the IFS including officers from other services like the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), who are sometimes at the receiving end of the IFS control of this network.

The last time a political appointee in India met with stiff resistance from the powers-that-be in South Block, the then Prime Minister threw in the towel and let down his appointee.

Bhabani Sen Gupta, who was appointed as foreign policy adviser to Prime Minister I.K. Gujral, lasted no more than a day or two in office.

The new arrangements for Agnihotri's accreditation are said to have been discussed in detail by Vajpayee with the special

envoy as well as by Indian officials in New York and Washington during the Prime Minister's stay in the Big Apple this month.

By accrediting Agnihotri to India's permanent mission to the UN, New Delhi has taken a leaf out of the book of several other missions to the UN.

Many of them have more than one diplomat with the rank of ambassador and they also serve as advisers in specialised areas such as law, environment, health and other similar issues.

Vajpayee's decision has also spared India of the unpleasant task of having to go back to the state department with a fresh set of reasons for getting Agnihotri accredited in Washington.

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THE TELEGRAPH

Foreign policy blues

Crying foul at whatever the USA does in one breath and asking for favours from Washington in the next as India has been doing for nearly five decades displays one plain symptom – we are yet to grow up to take our place in global affairs, writes JK DUTT

ulist method. Amidst outlandish fanfare and publicity – a Kolkata daily in its editorial (not *The Statesman*) hailed him as a reborn biblical figure – he flew off to the scene of battle, appropriately tagged with his coterie.

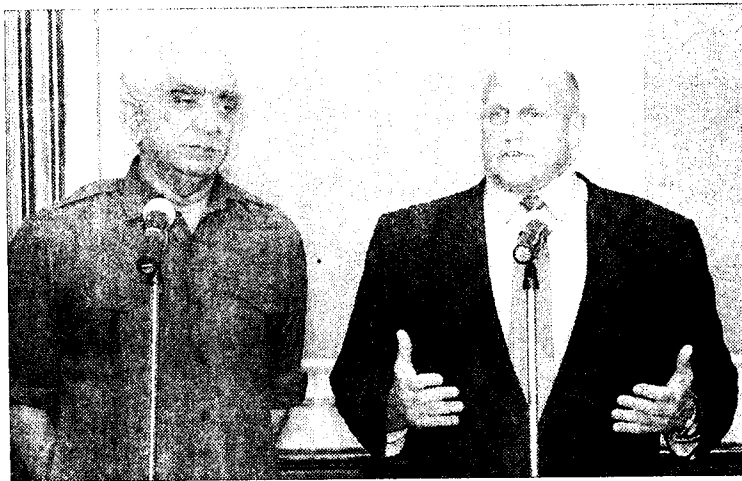
General Norman Schwartzkopf's comments on this chutzpah are strictly censored! In the event, our star reached Teheran where his courage apparently ran out and he and his entourage quietly slunk back to India. But the damage to our foreign policy had been well and truly inflicted by then.

Our foreign minister of the day publicly embraced the Iraqi President, complimenting him on his strike on Kuwait, quite forgetting that a large number of Indians work in that country.

The Kuwaitis naturally took umbrage at this and hounded out all Indian workers. Amidst all this, our Prime Minister officially permitted American warplanes to use the facilities of our airports in the course of their operational routing. The international community must have wondered whether India had lost its marbles, seeing the bewildering range of contradictions!

The irony of it all was after Rajiv Gandhi was killed, Iraq did not even bother to issue a condolence message, let alone send an emissary to attend his funeral. There was not a murmur of protest from India at this deliberate snub. By no stretch of the imagination can our antics be acclaimed to be a mature nation's foreign policy.

Another of our surrealistic vignettes was visible during the 50-year celebrations of the UN in 1995 at New York. While our Prime Minister, foreign minister, and ambassador were trying to convince President Bill Clinton that it would be inappropriate for the USA to sell weapons systems to "bad guy Pakistan" as this went against Gandhian peace values so espoused by "good guy India", Islamabad's dynamic representative at Washington (rated by the US state department as



US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage at a press conference with the then Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh in New Delhi in June. – AFP

a veritable go-getter besides being very easy on the eye!) manipulated the Hank Brown Amendment and ensnared a huge quantum of arms which included F-16s, leaving our three *netas* dumbstruck.

The point to note is, our ersatz holier than thou façade does not jell. It never seems to sink in that crying foul at whatever the USA does in one breath and asking for favours from Washington in the next as we have been doing for nearly five decades displays one plain symptom, namely, we have not yet grown up to take our place in global affairs.

Today, we are seeking America's help in containing Pakistan-sponsored infiltration of terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir but whenever we feel like it we lambast the USA. We adopted an overtly hostile posture to Operation Enduring Freedom, assuming that the world had forgotten India's enthusiasm (especially that of our Left lot) at Russia's aggression into Afghanistan resulting in the death of about 900,000 Afghans.

One could surely term this as India's "Jekyll 'n' Hyde theatricism". We may not always approve of what the USA does but it does us no good to broadcast our displeasure in the manner that has become second nature to us. There are other methods of getting our views across without creating a political discord. A regional case is worth analysing. Our misadventure in Sri Lanka under the guise of peacekeeping will forever remain a hallmark of our defunct foreign policy.

New Delhi ungraciously fell into a trap laid by Colombo, the outcome

of which was the tragic death of 1,500 of our Army personnel at the hands of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. It makes no sense that not having been able to solve our own domestic insurgency problems since Independence, we nonchalantly went off to tackle one in a wholly alien land.

The international relations doctrine stipu-

lates that any peacekeeping force must invariably be multinational in composition and character, never mononational. Yet we violated this maxim without a second thought. We achieved nothing in Sri Lanka other than earning a dubious reputation and making a spectacle of ourselves in the bargain. With Myanmar, too, we tried our gratuitous sermonising despite several warnings from Yangon not to interfere in its internal affairs.

We insisted on making a huge din of our support for Aung San Suu Kyi and democracy, knowing well enough that this was no business of ours. An enraged Yangon then let loose a wave of terrorist-cum-drug infused activities into North-east India, besides commandeering two of our villages on the Manipur border.

We ended up doing an uncomplimentary volte-face and seeking peace as a consequence. Our unbecoming conduct brought us down several notches in our regional standing. Yet amazingly, where we should have reacted positively, we simply shied off.

Bangladesh audaciously slaughtered 18 of our BSF jawans in 2001 in an ambush. All that we responded with was some grumbling! Some radical reforms in India's international relations policy are required. For a start, we need to assert ourselves in a mature and well thought-out manner.

Next, we must stop our practice of America bashing. Lastly and most important, we have to understand that a realistic and comprehensive foreign policy must be formulated from a composite multifaceted tem-

plate, not through ad hoc measures as has been our mode.

This template comprises disciplines like behavioural science, political pragmatism, cooperative security, economic balancing, geographical compulsions, historical connections and the like. Let us, therefore, apply the template to a serious concern that is appearing on our horizon and address it accordingly.

Post-Afghanistan, the USA has started expanding its influence in Eurasia ostensibly to continue with its declared war on terrorism but in the alternate vein, to spread its dominance in those areas that it perceives to be inimical to its interests.

The USA is aware that India is a rising power centre in Asia and a nuclear one at that. Washington will covertly attempt to browbeat New Delhi into toeing a line that will enhance American hegemonistic objectives c.f. Japan and South Korea.

The National Missile Defence is one such instrument of political coercion. The USA's whimsies apropos Iraq is another pointer. America's attitude towards the Israel-Palestine conflict depicts a contrast in posturing by a super-power that should really be more neutral.

Arab nations are maintaining a semi-detached stance, thus leaving Palestinians to fend for themselves. India needs to pre-empt a similar situation about itself in the near future.

Who knows George W Bush might just opt to menace India after the Iraq episode? Ergo, New Delhi must shed its diffidence in initiating a strategic alliance with China and Russia, a distinctive feature that has been on the cards for quite awhile.

Such an alliance can become a new global pole – perhaps, a second one after the European Union – and is sure to draw a large number of Asian countries into its ambit. A move of this kind will vindicate the oft-expressed desire of India, China and Russia of instituting a multipolar world for ensuring global stability.

India should waste no time in setting the ball rolling. Another Indian leadership venture in foreign policy will be the creation of an Indian Ocean Treaty involving all the littorals of this geo-strategic waterway.

This should be completed before other interested parties establish their gunboat diplomacy tactics in this vital east-west sea link.

India must initiate this move, perhaps as a corollary to the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation and the South Asian Preferential Trading Agreement. The time has come for India to make its mark in international relations in a manner that will accrue big-time placements for itself in the new millennium.

(The author is a retired Lieutenant-Colonel, Indian Army.)

What ails India's foreign policy? The short answer is, surrealism. India's foray into international relations during the early 1950s was couched in make-believe as India self-appointed itself as the world's conscience keeper-cum-judge.

It established an entente with its mentor the former USSR but did not consider it necessary to maintain a working balance with the other power bloc, the West.

Inexplicably, New Delhi started its unwarranted criticism of the USA in particular at every opportunity. Going for America's jugular became the favourite pastime of all our political parties. Oddly enough, this trait exists even today.

Our first major jolt in international relations came in the form of China's attack on India in 1962. With Moscow turning a polite but deaf ear to New Delhi's entreaty to restrain Beijing, we had no option but to appeal to Washington.

President John F Kennedy responded handsomely to our SOS with men, material and moral support. A golden chance presented itself to us for firming up a strong connectivity with the USA but we made no defined attempts towards this.

Soon, things were back to square one with fresh antagonism emanating from us for things American. Whether something done by the USA had any connection with India or not – and most of them did not – our leaders vied with one another to pillory that country.

India felt the backlash from this during the 1965 Indo-Pak war. The USA clearly favoured Pakistan over us. Tashkent amply proved the point when under pressure from Washington and its allies and with a benign Moscow looking on, we surrendered lock, stock and barrel to Pakistan. The line doing the round in the Services' circle was, "Our poor man at Tashkent not only handed back every bit of Pak territory that we had captured at great cost but also handed in his dinner pail!" In the 1971 war, too, the USA pushed for Pakistan but India won a splendid military victory that sadly, was given away at Shimla.

Nothing, however, can beat our bizarre performance in international relations as exhibited in the Gulf War of 1991: it was vaudeville at its best. We began by going overboard in our support for Saddam Hussein when he attacked Kuwait, bolstering our stand by loudly denouncing the multinational force's operations against Iraq spearheaded by the USA.

Our local comrades gheraoed the American consulate in Kolkata till the US state department served a strong demarche on our ambassador in Washington, after which our Prime Minister pleaded with West Bengal's chief minister to ease off on the consulate.

In the meantime, India's Prime Minister-in-waiting decided to stop Operation Desert Storm by a pop-

PM rejects LoC as international border

Press Trust of India

NEW YORK, Sept. 16. — In a veiled reference to Pakistan, the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, has asked the international community to act firmly against countries that abet terrorism, while at the same time rejecting conversion of the Line of Control in J&K into the International Border between India and Pakistan.

"The United Nations and the international community need to take action against those who are associated with terrorism .. and shelter, finance and train terrorists," Mr Vajpayee said, without naming any country in particular. He was speaking at the conclusion of his five-day visit to the USA, during which he addressed the 57th UN General Assembly session and met US President George Bush and a host of other leaders.

Addressing a press conference shortly before

leaving for home, Mr Vajpayee said there was no question of converting the LoC into the border and that there was no discussion on the issue with Mr Bush. Mr Vajpayee said though India received strong support from world leaders, including Mr Bush, in its fight against terrorism, it would have to depend on itself to wipe out the scourge from J&K and other parts of the country.

Mr Vajpayee said Mr Bush had expressed full commitment for India's fight against terrorism and had condemned killings in J&K aimed at sabotaging the polls. The US President had also welcomed the elections in the state, and hoped these would help facilitate talks between India and Pakistan, he added. Significantly, Mr Vajpayee said, Mr Bush had for the first time not emphasised on resumption of talks with Pakistan.

Every leader he had met here had condemned terrorist attacks in J&K and elsewhere in India,

Mr Vajpayee said. "I discussed with all these leaders the imperative need for democracies to cooperate in rooting out terrorism effectively and without discrimination." Mr Vajpayee, who met Mr Bush a day after the 9/11 anniversary, said "terrorism can show its ugly face any day, any time and in any form." The disappearance of Al-Qaida men needs to be addressed urgently as there is information that they are regrouping again, he stressed.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by external affairs minister Mr Yashwant Sinha and national security adviser Mr Brajesh Mishra at the press conference. Indo-US relations have moved beyond being Pakistan-centric, he said, and now focussed on trade and cooperation in scientific, defence and civilian nuclear space technology.

Iraq attack worries Pervez, page 2
Editorial: Tea and teapot! page 8

17 SEP 2001

DISTANT PROSPECTS

Neither any great success nor ^{21/12} abject failure marked the last one year of India's foreign policy and diplomacy. Indeed, the year was characterized by uncertainty, and it can only be hoped that there will be greater clarity in India's external policy in the new year. As has been the case for many years now, it was Pakistan and New Delhi's relations with Islamabad that dominated India's foreign policy in 2002. The year witnessed the biggest mobilization of the Indian armed forces since the 1971 war. This mobilization was in response to the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament for which terrorist organizations sponsored by Pakistan were responsible. It did seem on at least two occasions last year that India was prepared to go to war to prevent Pakistan's further sponsorship of terrorism. What prevented the outbreak of the hostility in January and then in May, after the attack on the army camp near Jammu, and what were the gains from the policy of coercive diplomacy will continue to be analysed by the historians of the future. But it is clear that there were three factors which ultimately stopped India and Pakistan from going to war for the fourth time. First, the presence of nuclear weapons on both sides. New Delhi exercised greater caution than it would have, had there been no nuclearization of south Asia. Second, Pakistan did take some steps, piecemeal in retrospect, to clamp down on terrorist organizations. Mr Pervez Musharraf made a significant speech in January, in which he assured the world that Pakistan's territory will not be used to support terrorists against any country. With the benefit of hindsight, these promises did not translate into reality, but they were able to at least buy Pakistan time at critical moments. Finally, the international community played a key role in diffusing the tension. *9.8.02*

The United States of America, particularly, was active in putting pressure on Pakistan to stop its support for terrorism and also pleaded with India to exercise restraint. India's relationship with the US demonstrated a continued fluctuation. While there is much that binds New Delhi and Washington, India continues to be concerned about Washington's relationship with Pakistan. At the end of the year, New Delhi's relationship with Pakistan had far from normalized and yet the chances of war breaking out are also slim. The US continues to be a key partner for India. But it remains to be seen if the new year can bring about a dramatic change in the equation between Washington, New Delhi and Islamabad. The prospects of real peace emerging in the region, however, remain distant.

Delhi wary of Dhaka-Beijing defence deal

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Dec. 27: The defence agreement signed by China and Bangladesh on Wednesday is being watched in India with cautious interest.

South Block is not sure what the pact would mean for the two countries and for the region. But some in the establishment are worried that the renewed vigour with which China is wooing Bangladesh may be aimed at opening another front against India, this time in the east.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, who is now touring China, signed the agreement on defence cooperation with Beijing. She also held wide-ranging talks with her Chinese

counterpart Zhu Rongji and other senior leaders on developments in South Asia and the rest of the world.

China's attempts to woo the Bangladesh National Party government and broaden its relations with Dhaka became apparent from Beijing's financial loan, trade concessions and assurance to help build infrastructure. But the most significant step has been the agreement on defence cooperation.

Officially, India has not yet reacted to the agreement. Foreign ministry officials said they were aware of the developments, but they needed more details about the accord before expressing their views.

The reports in the Banglad-

eshi media, so far, have been vague because they do not specify what the defence accord aims to achieve.

Media reports from Dhaka suggest it is an umbrella deal that will help institutionalise the existing agreements between the two countries. It will also help enhance cooperation in defence training and production.

The reports are sketchy and Delhi may be awaiting more information on the pact from its mission in Dhaka and other sources, but the developments have clearly sparked concern in South Block.

Experts believe the deal may be China's attempt to open another front against India to keep it preoccupied in South Asia at

the cost of fulfilling its ambitions as a key international player.

"It is clear China has shown Bangladesh the carrot," former foreign secretary S.K. Singh said. The developments are serious and, unless set right, could affect the eastern front, he said.

China's close links with Pakistan is well known. India believes that Beijing has contributed to more than 80 per cent of Pakistan's military hardware and ammunition, and also secretly helped Islamabad develop nuclear and missile programmes.

The Chinese leadership, aware of the hostile relations between India and Pakistan, may thus be deliberately trying to open a front against Delhi in the east.

The agreement's timing is also suited to both China and Bangladesh. Since the BNP government came to power a year ago, its relations with India have been strained.

It worsened after the Indian leadership openly accused Bangladesh of harbouring terrorists who are responsible for violence in India.

China, aware of these developments, has found an easy and available partner in Bangladesh.

For Khaleda, the agreement is an opportunity to thumb her nose at India and show that Bangladesh has stronger allies to fall back on. Dhaka would not hesitate to cooperate with the stronger ally in the face of any strong-arm tactics by Delhi.



Khaleda Zia

ACCORD SIGNED; TERRORISM NOT IN ICC STATUTE

India, U.S. not to surrender nationals to any tribunal

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, DEC. 26. India and the United States today signed an agreement whereby neither country will surrender persons of the other country to any international tribunal without the other country's express consent.

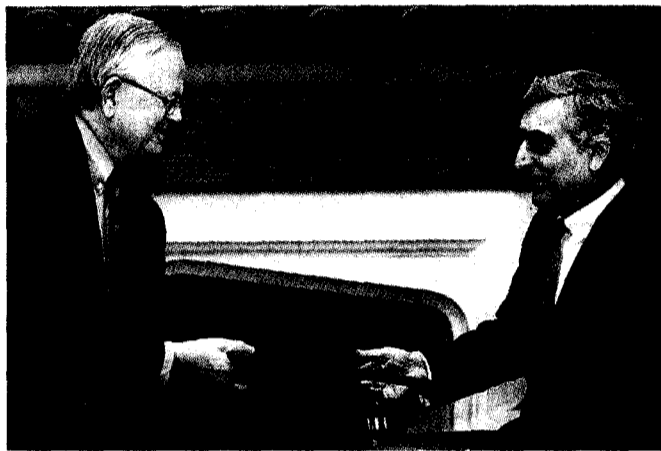
The agreement, signed by the Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal, and the U.S. Ambassador, Robert Blackwill, at Hyderabad House, defines "persons" as current or former Government employees, military personnel or nationals of either country.

"As strong, vibrant democracies, both India and the U.S. share concerns about the possible conflict between robust, national judicial processes and international tribunals as also the impact of such tribunals on national sovereignty," the Foreign Office spokesman said today. The U.S. had shown a "lot of initiative and interest" in signing the agreement.

(With today's agreement, the U.S. has signed 16 similar agreements on the non-surrender of persons with other countries).

While there was no reference to the International Criminal Court (ICC), the spokesman said that the context in which the accord was signed was the ICC.

In a statement, Mr. Blackwill



The Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal, and the U.S. Ambassador, Robert Blackwill, exchanging documents after signing an agreement in New Delhi on Thursday. —AFP

said India and the U.S. shared the strongest possible commitment to bringing to justice those who commit war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. "However, we are concerned about the International Criminal Court treaty with respect to the adequacy of checks and balances, the impact of the treaty on national sovereignty and the potential for conflict with the U.N. charter," he said. "This accord... is emblematic of the strides that continue to be made in transforming U.S.-India relations. Both Governments look forward

to working in close cooperation on such significant issues," Mr. Blackwill said.

The Foreign Office spokesman said India had participated in the negotiations on the ICC treaty with a view to becoming a signatory. The statute that finally emerged fell short of expectations on a number of issues. For instance, international terrorism was not included and the statute had little flexibility in the nature of jurisdiction.

According to the spokesman, it blurred the distinction between customary law and treaty obligations in relation to defini-

tion of internal conflicts and crimes against humanity. The statute also failed to respect the sacrosanct principle of consent of States and the principle of territoriality in the exercise of criminal jurisdiction. The ICC, had been seen as a court which would handle cases in exceptional circumstances — such as failed States or where national judicial processes had collapsed.

Asked if India was concerned that the security personnel in Jammu and Kashmir could be taken to the ICC, he said that New Delhi's concerns related to its Army personnel involved in international peacekeeping operations. These personnel, he added, worked in difficult conditions in uncertain situations where law and order had, by definition, failed. The accord will enter into force upon an exchange of notes confirming that each party has completed the necessary domestic legal requirements to bring the agreement into force. "It will remain in force until one year after the date on which one party notifies the other of its intent to terminate this agreement. The provisions of this agreement shall continue to apply with respect to any act occurring, or any allegation arising, before the effective date of termination," the text of the agreement said.

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THE HINDU

Dealing with Washington & Moscow

7-f from HQ-10
16/11
By K.K. Katyal

India's relationship with Russia is a case of consolidation... With the U.S., it is a reversal of old, negative trends.

NEW DELHI could draw comfort from the manner its ties with the U.S. and Russia have shaped of late. There is little doubt about the importance of the two relationships to India, both individually and collectively. The exclusive superpower status of the U.S. imparts a special quality to its ties with India. The smooth equation could pave the way for help and support in various areas, notably political and economic. Also, it sends positive signals, from New Delhi's standpoint, to others especially the Western powers, influencing their approach to India. Russia is no longer a superpower and its relationship with India is devoid of the ideological content that characterised the Soviet Union's dealings with India. Nonetheless, the relevance of mutual ties has been retained, even enhanced, in the present-day changed context. In the past, India's special relationship with Moscow created suspicions in Washington while an occasional tilt towards the U.S. was misunderstood by the Soviet Union. That was the inescapable logic of the power bloc rivalries of the Cold War era. There are no such risks for New Delhi now because of the understanding and amity between the U.S. and Russia.

New Delhi cannot take for granted the continuance of its smooth equations with the two powers, because disagreements and divergences are not altogether absent and, if not tackled or contained in time, could develop into major problems, even crises. That emphasises the need and importance of regular interaction and of frank and candid exchanges for possible mid-course corrections. The recent contacts between India and Russia, climaxed by the Russian President, Vladimir Putin's visit to New Delhi, and the exchanges between senior officials of India and the U.S., notably the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary, Brajesh Mishra's meetings in Washington, served precisely this purpose. It does not mean that all the differences have been resolved or have vanished but it does mean that misunderstandings would not get out of control.

Given the history of New Delhi's relationship with Moscow and Washington, there is a qualitative differ-

ence in India's dealings with the two powers. Its relationship with Russia is a case of consolidation or of guarding against a slip-up. With the U.S., it is a reversal of the old, negative trends, of strengthening the "new beginning", made during the former President, Bill Clinton's trip to India.

The friendship with Moscow is time-tested. Russia did not take the sanctions route after the May 1998 nuclear tests by India; it did not succumb to pressures to cancel the cooperative arrangement to set up nuclear power plants in Tamil Nadu; the sale of its defence equipment to India has been accompanied by transfer of technology and has now moved on to the next higher stage — of joint designing and development and co-production. This is a significant dimension to the bilateral ties, the delays in the supply of spares and occasional hiccups in the execution of the defence deals notwithstanding. Russia, as mentioned by Mr. Putin, is prepared to expand cooperation in the field of nuclear energy "within the framework of international rules and obligations". At the same time, he saw a case for "improvement" in these rules and obligations.

As regards regional matters, Russia has been consistent in its support to India on Kashmir and related issues. In the joint statement on the Putin visit, Russia accepted the Indian stand that Islamabad needed to fulfil its obligation to prevent the infiltration of terrorists across the Line of Control and to eliminate terrorist infrastructure as a "pre-requisite" for the renewal of peaceful dialogue with Pakistan. Instinctively, however, Mr. Putin appeared to favour the line he had taken at a multilateral conference in Almaty, Kazakhstan, when he unsuccessfully worked for a meeting between the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and Pakistan's Pervez Musharraf. This was evident from his reply to a correspondent's question that "everything should be done in order to settle all disputes, including the dispute between India and Pakistan, by peaceful means". The recent

memorandum of understanding between Russia and Pakistan on the feasibility study of a gas pipeline suggested that the ties between these two countries may not remain frozen at the present stage. Is Indian diplomacy geared to meet that contingency?

The weakest link in the Indo-Russian relationship is the abysmally low level of trade and investment — a problem that the two sides resolved to address. It is not an easy job and the degree of success would be a material factor in the evolution of the bilateral ties.

Trade and investment have been strong links in India's ties with the U.S. which, otherwise, passed through several phases even in the short span of four years — since the Clinton visit in March 2000, especially in the context of the adversarial India-Pakistan relationship. The ups and downs, however, have not affected the stability achieved as a result of conscious efforts by the two sides. Had that not been the case, the disillusionment in New Delhi over the U.S. inability to restrain Pakistan from promoting terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir or the differences on Iraq would have de-railed the relationship.

To start with, New Delhi found itself in a happy position, with the U.S. showing complete understanding of India's concerns on terrorism. That was also the period when the U.S. took a stern view of Islamabad's role in promoting jihadi trends and of its "moral, diplomatic and political support" to "freedom fighters" in Jammu and Kashmir. Washington was far from impressed with the steps, purported to have been taken by Gen. Musharraf for the restoration of democracy. All that changed — to India's disadvantage — after 9/11. Islamabad acquired a new relevance, thanks to its geographical position, in the U.S.-led coalition's operations against Afghanistan. Gradually, however, the imbalance was set right, partly because of the realisation in Washington that the fight against ter-

rorism would be incomplete if the jihadi outfits in Pakistan continued to operate and religious fundamentalists held sway there. Gen. Musharraf was, therefore pressured into taking corrective steps.

There are limits to the U.S. diplomacy in dealing with Islamabad on India-related matters. Pakistan continues to be crucially important to Washington in the context of the unfinished fight against terrorism. This importance will increase if and when the U.S. carries out its threat to attack Iraq. India realises this — and, as such, no great hopes are pinned on Washington, though the evidence of continued violation of Pakistani commitments is conveyed to it from time to time. On its part, the U.S. keeps on repeating its exhortations to India for the resumption of dialogue with Pakistan, but New Delhi sticks to its tough line — "no talks till the infiltration of terrorists continues". Washington is not convinced but leaves it at that.

What does the narration of this sequence show? That a good part of India-U.S. relations is hyphenated — to use the expression of the former External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh — to Pakistan, and this creates complications. But the resultant divergences have not affected their dealings. As a matter of fact, this has led the two sides to shift their focus to bilateral matters. And there is a hope of an advance in this area.

On another important issue on which the U.S. has set its heart now — Iraq — the positions of India and U.S. differ, but this too has not created a serious problem in the bilateral field. This is so, even though India, giving up the earlier low-key stance, is now conspicuously vocal on the subject. New Delhi is opposed to the doctrine of regime change, to any unilateral action, outside the parameters set by the U.S. Security Council. This obviously runs counter to the U.S. stance. In the past, such divergences could have derailed the bilateral ties. To maintain the positive trends in the two cases — pronounced in the case of India-Russia ties, and promising in regard to the U.S. — is a challenging task, requiring skill and sustained effort. The immensity of the task is not to be underestimated.

'No concrete steps on trilateral cooperation'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 11. No concrete steps have been taken to further trilateral cooperation among India, Russia and China, the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, said in the Rajya Sabha today. Responding to questions on a statement he made on the recent visit by the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, he said the issue had figured in a meeting of the three Foreign Ministers in New York but since then no concrete steps had been taken.

The Prime Minister stressed that there had been no change of policy as far as weaponisation of outer space was concerned. He was responding to a question on the joint statement by India and Russia on the need to prevent the weaponisation of outer space.

Earlier, Mr. Vajpayee said in identical statements in both Houses of Parliament that Mr. Putin's visit underlined Moscow and New Delhi's "mutual commitment" to constantly strengthen their strategic partnership, intensify political consultations and give a new dimension to economic relations.

"We will continue to attach the highest importance to our relations with Russia. In keeping with our commitment to annual summits, I have accepted President Putin's invitation to visit Russia next year," he remarked. The Prime Minister concurred with the Russian leader that the international regime on civilian applications of nuclear energy needed reforms. "President Putin confirmed Russia's interest in continued cooperation with India on civilian applications of nuclear energy. In the joint press interaction after our talks, he ex-

pressed the view that the international regime on these matters needs reform. We fully agree with this," Mr. Vajpayee said.

On defence cooperation between the two countries, he said this now included joint research, development and production. The state-of-the-art Brahmos missile was a result of joint collaboration. "India and Russia are now embarking on the co-production of this (Brahmos) missile system for its induction into the armed forces of both countries. President Putin and I agreed that a number of other projects hold promise for future cooperation," Mr. Vajpayee maintained. He said that the "Delhi Declaration" reaffirmed that neither country would take any action which may threaten or impair the security of the other.

"We have declared that both countries would be guided by these principles in their security and defence policies and military-technical cooperation with third countries...." On the international situation, the two countries agreed that "strong and sustained" measures were needed to combat terrorism. "The U.N. Security Council resolutions against terrorism — and particularly resolution 1373 — should be strictly implemented." "As victims of terrorism having its roots in our common neighbourhood, India and Russia have a strong security interest in meeting this threat through preventive and deterrent measures, nationally and bilaterally. The agreement to set up a joint working group on combating terrorism will further strengthen our cooperation in this sphere," the Prime Minister said.

THE HINDU

12 DEC 2002

Kuala Lumpur date for Atal, Pervez

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Dec. 7: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee may skip going to Islamabad for the Saarc summit in early January, but he will not be able to avoid sharing the dais with Pervez Musharraf at the Non-Aligned Movement meet in Kuala Lumpur in February.

South Block officials are not willing to comment on whether the Nam summit could lead to a Vajpayee-Musharraf meeting on the sidelines. "It is too far away and it will be premature to say anything on a meeting between the two at this stage," a foreign

ministry official said.

For such a meeting to take place, a lot would depend on how things proceed in the next few months. Saarc nations are making serious attempts to iron out differences and put in place a draft on the preferential trade agreement by the year-end. Officials will meet in Kathmandu after Christmas to work it out. But this may still seem "too-little-too-late".

Earlier, India had cited lack of progress on this draft as a reason for not going to Islamabad. Indications over the past few weeks, too, suggest that Vajpayee may not travel there. But there is

no ambiguity about Vajpayee attending the Nam meet in the third week of February.

In preparation for the Nam meet, Yashwant Sinha will leave for Cape Town on Wednesday for a meeting of a select group of foreign ministers from 16 developing countries. The three-day meet, starting Friday, will focus on the ongoing debate on the relevance of Nam and how it can be revitalised.

A founding member of Nam, India has always used the forum as a happy hunting ground. But over the past few decades, questions have been raised on its relevance and effectiveness to high-

light and safeguard the interests of the developing world. South Block officials concede that Nam has lost much of its importance in a global scenario where America's primacy is acknowledged by all and where no single country or group of countries have managed to counter-balance it.

At the Cape Town meet, developments in Iraq in the face of an imminent military strike by the US will be a topic for talks. Though Cuba, Algeria and Egypt are part of the group of ministers, Nam nations realise they cannot afford to take a confrontationalist stand vis-

à-vis the US. It is in this context that Nam will have to find a new role for itself. The forum will continue to talk about strengthening the UN and its importance in resolving conflict worldwide, but the emphasis this time will be on closer cooperation in the economic field.

Member nations will also coordinate their positions on the World Trade Organisation to ensure that the developing world does not end up losers. They will also discuss access to more sophisticated technology that remains limited to developed countries.

8 DEC 2002

India and the Gulf war

By C. Raja Mohan

As the world braces for the confrontation between Saddam Hussein and George W. Bush, the challenge for India is to find ways to protect its larger interests in Iraq.

INDIA WILL soon have to make up its mind on how to deal with the impending war in the Persian Gulf and the political future of Iraq with or without Saddam Hussein. Over the weekend Iraq confronts an important deadline on the full disclosure of its capabilities on weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Even as the international arms inspectors comb through suspected sites in Iraq, war clouds are beginning to gather. It is one thing for India to stay with the safe position of supporting the United Nations mandate on Iraq. But it is entirely another matter for New Delhi to prepare itself for what could be a rapid series of developments in the Persian Gulf in the coming days.

Iraq is believed to have figured prominently in the discussions between the visiting Russian President, Vladimir Putin, and the Indian leadership. Russia and the United States have been in constant touch over Iraq. And the indications are that at their meeting a few days ago, the U.S. President, George W. Bush, has assured Mr. Putin that Russia's economic interests in Iraq will be taken on board in the future political arrangements in Baghdad. India should have got a good sense of the Russian thinking on both the military and political dimensions of the current crisis in the Gulf.

As Mr. Putin leaves the capital today, the National Security Adviser, Brajesh Mishra, heads to Washington for consultations with the Bush Administration and will also stop over in London and Paris for talks. Besides the normal focus on expanding bilateral relations, Mr. Mishra will inevitably have to address the imminent war against Iraq, which is at once the most important international question today and has the potential to transform the Middle East political landscape in the years to come.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Deputy National Security Adviser, Stephen Hadley, will be in town this week to engage the Government on a full

range of issues; but Iraq will be at the top of his mind. Mr. Hadley is among the many senior officials of the Bush Administration who are fanning out across the world to tie up military and political arrangements for the next Gulf war.

How soon could the war against Iraq happen? The final American military confrontation with Mr. Hussein might never take place, if the Iraqi leader opts for voluntary exile or

is overthrown in a military coup. The principal political objective of the Bush Administration in Iraq is neither the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction or the presumed sources of international terrorism in the Gulf nation. The real American aim is to overthrow Mr. Hussein. If the regime change takes place without the use of massive force, so much the better for the U.S. But given the perceived tight grip that Mr. Hussein exercises over the Iraqi security apparatus, the prospects of a coup might not be significant. There are fewer bets on the Iraqi strongman quietly taking a flight out of Baghdad.

There is another view that if Mr. Hussein fully complies with the U.N. demands on WMD, there is no real reason for a war. That is a political argument that gives us no insights into the unfolding dynamic in the Gulf. The U.N. process of arms inspections is a means of providing legitimacy and broader international support to American action against Iraq, but not an end in itself for the Bush Administration.

The real questions are centred on the logic that Washington would come up with to declare that Mr. Hussein is in "material breach" of the U.N. resolutions and exercise its

proclaimed right to go to war. All kinds of "unexpected" military incidents could take place between Iraq and its neighbours, which would bolster the American argument to confront Mr. Hussein. Look out for increasing military tensions between Iraq and Kuwait in the next few days.

While the debate on the timing of the confrontation continues, a war

of sorts is already on against Iraq. In the last few weeks the U.S. has stepped up its bombing activity in the no-fly-zones that had been imposed over large southern and northern swathes of Iraqi territory. Increased American attacks on Iraqi installations are beginning to soften up the Iraqi military machine. They seem to be the prelude to a quick separation of the southern city of Basra dominated by Shias and the northern Kurdish areas from the military control of Mr. Hussein within days of a full-fledged attack on Iraq.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military is mobilised and a number of exercises are planned in the next few days on the territories of Iraq's Gulf neighbours. The mission of these exercises could quickly change to actual action against Iraqi forces. The U.S. has also stepped up psychological operations to demoralise the Iraqi military and win support from the people.

The White House has also appointed a special envoy to deal with the Iraqi dissident groups who are expected to meet later this month in London to publicise a political framework for a "free and united Iraq" after Mr. Hussein. The U.S. hopes that the unending squabbles among these groups would be brought down to a manageable level.

If and when the war begins in Iraq, it will be very unlike the Gulf War of January 1991. The last time, the U.S. conducted a prolonged bombing of Iraqi cities and military targets before launching a full-scale military invasion of the country. This time around the campaign is likely to avoid extensive bombing of the cities and focus on separating the field armies, engineering defections from the senior ranks, and creating popular insurrections. The idea would be to quickly transform the image of the war from being one between the U.S. and Iraq to one among the Iraqis to overthrow Mr. Hussein.

By keeping the war short and avoiding excessive bombardment of the civilian population in Iraq, the U.S. hopes to hold on to the uncomfortable Arab allies it has dragged into the coalition. The Arab street remains sullen but also silent. There have been more anti-war demonstrations in Western cities than in Arab ones. Among the non-Arab states in the region, Washington is tying up the loose ends with Turkey which would have a pivotal role in the war. There is also speculation about secret diplomacy between Washington and Teheran. Iran, which has no love for Mr. Hussein but is also daggers drawn with the U.S., has proclaimed "active neutrality" in the impending war. The U.S. appears to have persuaded a key Shia Iraqi opposition group, that is based in Iran, to join the war effort against Mr. Hussein.

As the world braces for the confrontation between Mr. Hussein and Mr. Bush, the challenge for India is to find ways to protect its larger interests in Iraq. The Government's consultations with Russia this week and the Western powers in the coming days naturally involves a frank discussion of both India's stakes as well as the kind of political and military role New Delhi might play in the Gulf in the coming weeks. That also necessarily includes some hard Indian thinking on the future of Iraq with or without Mr. Hussein.

WORLD VIEW

5 DEC 2002

PM set to miss Saarc appointment

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 1 DECEMBER

PRIME Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Sunday virtually ruled out the possibility of his attending the forthcoming Saarc summit in Islamabad, saying that his visit was contingent upon cessation of Pakistan's support to cross-border terrorism before January 12 when the multilateral event is to commence.

"A thought can be given to it if there is a complete halt to cross-border terrorism before the dates of the summit," Mr Vajpayee was quoted by a news agency as telling presspersons in Shimla. The whisker-thin Prime Minister may appear to have left by not saying a categorical "no" may not be there considering the tough

pre-condition he laid down. As a matter of fact, his Shimla visit witnessed a sharp attack on Pakistan for planning a wave of terror attacks against innocent civilians temples.

Mr Vajpayee's Shimla remark on Saarc settles the confusion that minister of state Digvijay Singh created when he rushed out, exceeding his brief, to declare that the Prime Minister was going to keep his date with other South Asian heads of state. The acute embarrassment caused to the MEA by the freeloading of the junior minister was further increased when the defence minister waded in the confusion to endorse the findings of Mr Singh's crystal ball gazing.

Mr Vajpayee's remarks at Shimla, however, confirm that Mr Singh was far off the mark when he stepped for-

ward to shoulder the additional burden of designing the itinerary of the Prime Minister. The agency report also quoted Mr Vajpayee as expressing his frustration over Pakistan's attempt to convert Saarc meetings into a platform for India-bashing.

"What is the use of going to Pakistan for Saarc meeting when Pakistan is not prepared to talk on any issue except Kashmir," he told presspersons.

While repeating that Kashmir was a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan and not something to be discussed during Saarc meetings, Mr Vajpayee also pointed out that Islamabad was yet to act on recommendations regarding economic cooperation agreed on in previous Saarc meetings.

He was also clear that there would be no change on Islamabad's stand towards India following Pakistan's new Prime Minister Mir Jafar Ullah Khan Jamali's assertion that there will be no change in its Kashmir policy.



VAJPAYEE: IN CONTROL

2 DEC 2002

Delhi gears up for Iraq minus Saddam

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Dec. 1: A shift in India's Iraq policy is underway. Despite the brave public front, South Block has started gearing up for a situation in which even if a war in Iraq is not inevitable, at least a change in regime is.

National security adviser Brajesh Mishra, who leaves for Washington next week, will discuss with the Bush administration, among other things, a post-Saddam Hussein scenario in Baghdad where Indian interests are not jeopardised.

Topping India's agenda are the contracts it has won in Iraq's oil sector. Among them are the agreements signed between ONGC Videsh and Oil Exploration Company for exploration of a block in southern Iraq and to develop the Tuba oil field. If Saddam goes and is replaced by a pro-US regime, India does not want to be caught in a situation in which its interests are harmed.

Mishra, who is scheduled to have detailed discussions with his American counterpart Condoleezza Rice and other senior US officials, will try and find out what Washington is planning for Iraq. He will sensitise the Bush administration to Delhi's concerns and see where India fits in in the changes the US proposes for the Gulf nation.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had said last month that India would not support any change of regime in Iraq imposed from outside. A few days ago, foreign minister Yashwant Sinha told Parliament that Delhi "will not let down its friend Sad-

dam Hussein". But both said Saddam will have to follow the UN Security Council resolution in letter and spirit to avoid a war.

India's stakes in Iraq and in the neighbouring Gulf region are high. It has over 10.5 million citizens in the area and earns about \$6 million from the remittance they send back home every year. More important, the region is India's main source of energy.

A repeat of Operation Desert Storm will adversely affect this source of energy and could force oil prices to soar. This, in turn will trigger prices of other essential items to shoot up. Predictably, it will hurt the Indian economy and may not allow it to achieve the 5 per cent growth rate it aspires to reach. It will also disrupt the lives of the Indian diaspora in the area and Delhi may have to make urgent arrangements to bring them back home.

But these losses are short-term. South Block mandarins are busy assessing what India stands to gain in the long run. "While our foreign policy is principled, it must not ignore national interest," an official in the foreign ministry said, arguing that Delhi must take note of ground reality.

Although a war in Iraq has been stalled for the time being, no one can say for sure whether it has been totally avoided. Even if Saddam agrees to comply with the UN resolution and cooperates with the arms inspectors, there is no guarantee he will be able to save his chair. India believes that sooner or later, he will have to go. So, it is prudent for Delhi to be prepared for a scenario in which a new regime is installed in Baghdad by the US.

2 DEC 2002

THE TELEGRAPH

India, U.S. and the Gulf war

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, NOV. 24. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's remarks last week on Iraq have set off an intense speculation among the diplomatic community here on India's approach to the current American confrontation with Baghdad.

Mr. Vajpayee's comment that others should not impose their will on the Iraqi people seemed designed to please Saddam Hussein when one of his special envoys was in town. Many media reports also described it as a direct snub to the Bush Administration.

The Foreign Office scrambled to put out the word that there was no shift in India's position and Mr. Vajpayee's remarks were reported neither accurately nor fully.

It pointed to Mr. Vajpayee's demands that Iraq should fully comply with the United Nations resolutions and give up weapons of mass destruction, and when the international community satisfies itself that Iraq is in full compliance the sanctions must be lifted.

In its carefully articulated position on Iraq, the Foreign Office is silent on the prospect for a "regime change" in Baghdad. Nor is there any criticism of Washington, which is widely believed to be determined to oust the Government of Saddam Hussein.

Unlike leaders elsewhere in the democratic world, Mr. Vajpayee does not usually expound India's foreign policy challenges in a comprehensive manner, say in formal speeches.

Instead, brief remarks by him on public occasions tend to get all the attention. Observers of Indian diplomacy are left wondering if the few words from Mr. Vajpayee constitute the essence of policy.

More immediately, to prevent further misunderstanding on the Gulf, New Delhi

and Washington need to initiate a substantive political consultation.

Issues relating to Iraq war came up during Mr. Vajpayee's visit to Washington in September; but much has happened since then. The United Nations Security Council has unanimously endorsed the American demands on Iraq, and Baghdad has promised to comply. Meanwhile the Bush Administration is stepping up its preparations for a war against Iraq.

While the cat and mouse game between

DIPLOMATIC NOTEBOOK

the U.N. inspectors and Baghdad will unfold in the next few weeks, neither the threat of a war nor the likelihood of a regime change in Iraq has in any way lessened. The U.S., focused so far on the U.N. vote, is reaching out to other key nations in search of political and military support.

One political hint from Mr. Vajpayee might be that despite the low key nature of its stand, India's expansive interests in Baghdad and its abiding friendship with its people cannot be overlooked by the international community.

Mr. Vajpayee's remarks came amidst speculation that the Bush Administration has agreed to respect the Russian interests in Iraq in a future political set-up in Baghdad. Iraq owes Russia \$ 8 billions; Moscow has lucrative contracts to rehabilitate the Iraqi oil fields, including the West Qurna, which has one of the world's richest deposits. It is also eyeing two other important fields Majnoon and Nahr Umar. Russian oil companies also control nearly a third of Iraqi oil exports.

It has been known that Washington had privately assured Moscow on protecting Russian strategic investment in an Iraq

without Saddam Hussein. The U.S. President, George Bush, has now gone public. In a recent interview to a TV station in Russia, Mr. Bush said, "we fully realise that Russia has economic interests in Iraq... of course, these interests will be taken into account."

India too has a similar stake in Iraq — developing its oil fields, recovering old debts and gaining a share in the massive reconstruction of an Iraq free from sanctions. The protection of these interests should inevitably figure in the impending Indo-U.S. talks on Iraq.

One can only hope that in formulating the policy on Iraq, Mr. Vajpayee is being well served by the civilian and military intelligence agencies. Last time around, on Afghanistan, the agencies were wide of the mark.

Rewind to early November 2001, less than a month after the American bombing of Afghanistan started. Basing themselves on official assessments, both Mr. Vajpayee and the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, went public with their criticism of the American military strategy.

But within days of Indian leaders talking down to the Bush Administration, the Northern Alliance captured Mazar-e-Sharif and a few days later walked into Kabul. This time Mr. Vajpayee should insist that the agencies produce different scenarios for Iraq and have them scrutinised by others. Otherwise India's posturing on Iraq could look pretty silly a few weeks down the road.

It is also time for Mr. Vajpayee to figure out the most likely outcome of the current crisis in the Gulf. The Foreign Office is good at hedging bets.

That is valuable at times, but not good enough when a war is at hand. When the end game begins, it is Mr. Vajpayee who will have to pick, in advance, the winner of the next Gulf War.

THE HINDU

25 NOV 2002

Iraq-friendly PM takes a dig at USA

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 19. — The Prime Minister chose an unusual forum to urge the USA to exercise restraint against Iraq. No power should enforce its will on any country, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said while addressing a gathering at his residence on the occasion of Guru Nanak's birth anniversary.

Probably his first public utterance against American belligerence towards Iraq, Mr Vajpayee said all issues relating to Iraq should be sorted out under the auspices of the United Nations. "We hope no more war takes place in Iraq. All issues should be sorted out through talks under the auspices of the United Nations. No one should try to enforce its will on others." He likened the present situation with Guru Nanak's travels, that had taken him to Baghdad in the 15th century in search of peace.

On nuclear capabilities that Iraq is accused of harbouring, Mr Vajpayee said if Baghdad had "such weapons which endangered humanity, it (Iraq) should give them up on its own".

In a statement directed at Washington, he said everyone should understand that "people of all nations have a right to rule themselves and choose their leaders. No country should try to impose its will on any other country."

An inside call

LONDON, Nov. 19. — West must prevail upon Pakistan to close terrorist camps in Kashmir failing which they'll adopt double standards, a British leader has said. "The West needs to tell Pakistan that action must be taken to close the camps," said Shirley Williams, Liberal Democrats' leader in the Upper House. — PTI

He said: "If terrorism, of any form, any colour... wants to impose itself on anyone, it won't be allowed to succeed."

Mr Vajpayee was articulating India's stand on the issue. New Delhi has consistently advocated UN's multilateral approach, maintaining that no country should act unilaterally against another sovereign country. It has also urged Iraq to comply with the UN resolutions. Among them is UNSCR 1441 passed unanimously by the security council last week. It allows inspectors to monitor all of Iraq's weapons facilities after a four year hiatus.

If Iraq fully complies with the resolutions, New Delhi has sought removal of the UN sanctions imposed on it. The sanctions have crippled the economy of Iraq, which has the world's second largest oil reserves, and caused immense suffering to its people.

India has criticised attempts to forcibly remove Mr Saddam Hussein, saying it was the right of Iraqi citizens to choose whom they wanted to rule them.

Iraq's ambassador to New Delhi, Mr Salah Al-Mukhtar, has sought India's more active engagement in the monitoring process. He even wants Indian representatives in the team that'll inspect Iraqi weapons facilities. India, not being a member of the UN Security Council, can't foist itself on any such team, foreign ministry officials said.

Delhi rejects space regime

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Nov. 16: India has refused to be a party to the International Code of Conduct against ballistic missile programmes.

Delhi sees the code as yet another political document that not only perpetuates the existing technology denial regimes but is also likely to interfere with the peaceful use of India's space programme. Consenting countries will sign the code at The Hague, in the Netherlands, on November 25 and 26.

India has, however, made it clear that despite its differences on the proposed code of conduct it will continue to behave as a mature and responsible nation.

"While India cannot subscribe to the ICOC, we remain predisposed to work with like-minded countries towards a more inclusive, balanced and equitable approach to deal with the threat posed by proliferation of ballistic missiles," foreign ministry spokesperson Navtej Sarna said.

India's position, he argued, "will in no way detract from its resolve to pursue responsible

and co-operative policies to curb proliferation of ballistic missile technology".

At the outset, the initiative seemed a fresh and serious attempt to prevent clandestine transfer of missile and nuclear technology. It began with the 39 members of the Missile Technology Control Regime and was later taken up by the European Union. India is not a signatory to the MTCR, which it considers a technology denial regime.

The MTCR comprises all the recognised nuclear powers in the world — barring China — and is extremely reluctant to give access to missile technology to those in the developing world. What is worse, the so-called control has proved totally ineffective in checking clandestine transfer of missile and nuclear technology in South Asia, thereby affecting India's security environment.

Despite the denial of access, India has been able to develop not only its missile programme but is also the only sixth geo-stationary power in the world. Which means it is among the few with the ability to launch their

own satellite and carry out a space programme for peaceful uses.

The clandestine transfer of missile and technology between China, Pakistan and North Korea over the past many years has been a major security threat for India. In the wake of fresh media reports in the West about

possible secret missile and nuclear technology transfer between North Korea and Pakistan, Delhi felt the code of conduct would be effective in preventing such transfers through "greater transparency and inclusive multi-lateralism". It also participated in two meetings in Paris and Madrid.

India to oppose new missile code

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 15 — India will not be party to a new international code of conduct (ICOC) against ballistic missile proliferation, because, in its current formulation, such a regime did not accommodate its core concerns. Committed as it is to the non-proliferation of ballistic missiles and to export controls on such technologies, international efforts like the ICOC (and MTCR) had proved to be ineffective in preventing acquisition or proliferation of nuclear weapons development and ballistic missiles through clandestine transfers and linkages.

The most glaring recent example was the clandestine transfer of missile technology by Pakistan to North Korea.

Also, "the final ICOC document refers to ballistic missile development and space launch vehicles without a proper distinction," the external affairs ministry spokesman said, adding "India cannot subscribe to it."

"We find it difficult to accept an amalgamation of this nature and the implied questioning of the right to peaceful uses of space technology," the spokesman said.

A conference to launch the ICOC is due towards the end of this month, and will be at the level of senior technical officials and diplomats. The US, the European Union and some other key countries are party to the code.

India's position on the ICOC would, "in no way, detract from its resolve to pursue responsible and cooperative policies to curb proliferation of ballistic missile technology".

THE STATESMAN

16 NOV 2002

India moots free trade with Asean

Phnom Penh 5
 6/11

Yashwant Raj
Phnom Penh, November 5

INDIA AND the Association of South-East Asian Nations (Asean) decided today to work towards a Free-Trade Area Agreement. A draft Framework Agreement will be taken up for discussion in October 2003.

They also decided to develop "concrete programmes of cooperation" to fight transnational crimes, like terrorism, arms smuggling, money-laundering and drugs trade.

Proposing the trade pact at the first, and historic, India-Asean summit here on Tuesday, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said, "The economic linkages are inadequate; we need to fully realise the potential."

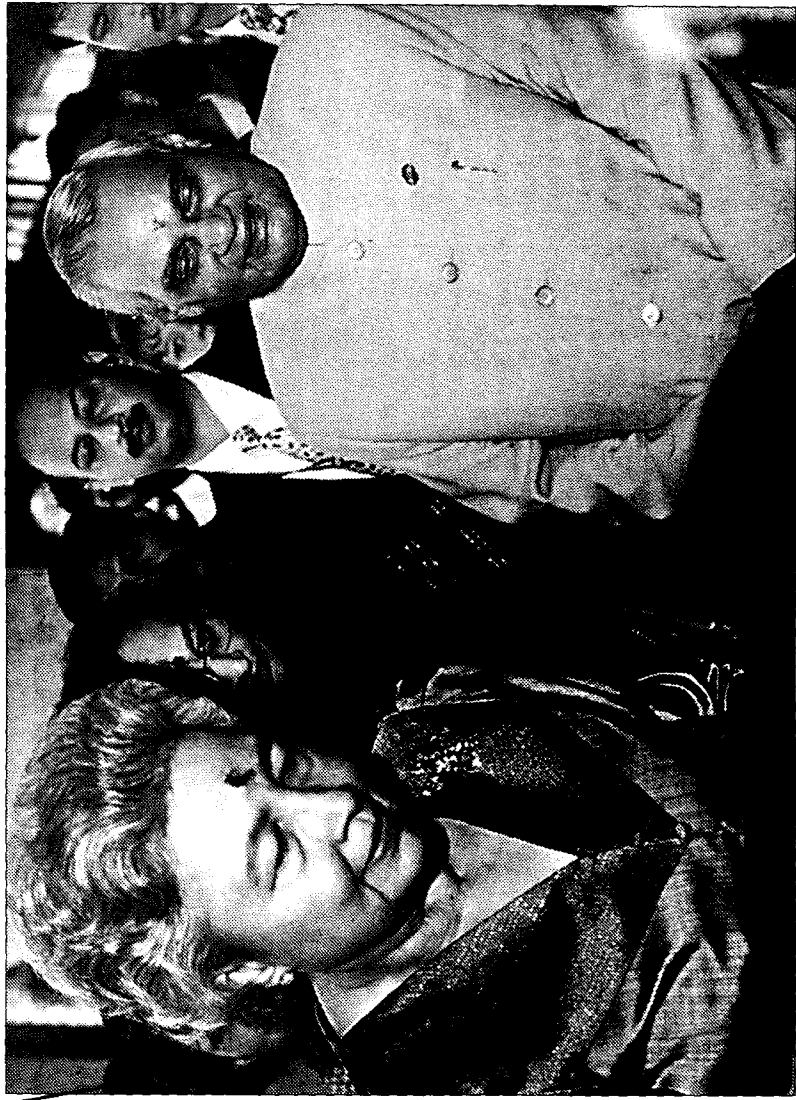
If and when signed, the trade agreement will enable the 10 Asean countries and India to do away with trade duties on selected items. But that is unlikely to happen in a hurry. It has taken India 10 years to reach this far, to a summit-level meeting.

Briefing reporters after the summit meeting, External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha said, "The PM is looking at 10

years." A joint statement issued after the summit described the setting up of an India-Asean Regional Trade and Investment Area as a "long-term objective". A draft Framework Agreement will be ready for discussion by the economic ministers when they meet here next October.

The hour-and-a half meeting went off extremely well for India, said Sinha. A Commerce Ministry official said, "There was a realisation — a final realisation — that Asean and India need each other." And that, he added, was the highpoint of today's meeting. The total volume of trade between India and Asean is worth \$ 10 billion now. But India believes — as stated by the Prime Minister — that is clearly not enough.

The South-East Asian countries agreed. Comparing Asean with a jumbo plane, Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said the 10 member countries formed the body and China, Japan and South Korea formed one of its wings. "But it cannot fly without the second wing," Sinha said quoting Tong. The jumbo got its second wing today, said the Singapore Prime Minister, with the summit with India.



AP

Prime Minister AB Vajpayee and Cambodian Queen Monineath in Phnom Penh on Tuesday.

Yashwant Sinha is reviving bilateral and multilateral cooperation in south Asia

Diplomatic initiatives

J.N. DIXIT

5-12 5/11

Yashwant Sinha has signalled a pertinent diversification of India's foreign policy focus since assuming charge as the minister for external affairs. Jaswant Singh's tenure in the foreign office, from end-1998 till this year, was characterized by India's concentration on relations with the United States of America and other important power centres of the world allied to the US. This was necessary because India had to deal with the fallout of its nuclear weaponization due to its heightened adversarial relationship with Pakistan, and due to the terrorist attacks on the US on September 11, 2001. The Indian Parliament and Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly being targeted by international terrorist groups was an additional impulse for a closer interaction with the major powers.

Sinha took charge when the critical factors affecting India's external relations had become rather static. It was time to attend to India's longer term interests, and to restore the content and credibility in India's relations with its immediate neighbours as well as with the Arab countries, relations with whom suffered some neglect. Sinha completed a round of visits to practically all the countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation early in August. He has visited Afghanistan, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. The only country left out of the itinerary was Pakistan for obvious reasons.

The post-September 11 global context in which Sinha's south Asian tour took place must be noted. All the countries in the SAARC region are part of the US campaign against international terrorism in one form or the other. Senior political and official figures from the US have visited south Asian countries except the Maldives and Bhutan. Pakistan and Bangladesh now have agreements regarding the stationing of forces with the US. The consequence, though not openly acknowledged, is a greater *de facto* involvement of the US in the SAARC region.

While all the countries in the SAARC region, including India, welcomed this US involvement as a positive development in the campaign against international terrorism and as a phenomenon which might increase US economic cooperation with all the countries of the area, India's other neighbours welcomed this development for additional reasons, namely, that the US's activist posture in south Asia would balance off the political apprehensions and economic or military threats they perceive from India. The US presence is also considered by these neighbours as a tempering factor controlling the implications of the nuclear weaponiza-

The author is former foreign secretary of India

tion of India and Pakistan.

Leaving aside the macro-level global context, aspects of the regional context are of specific relevance to the diplomatic initiative taken by Sinha. There is reticence and resentment against India shared by practically all its neighbours which can be summed up as follows. Because of its territorial size, demographic, technological, military and economic strengths, compared to its neighbours, India has an overweening and assertive stance with respect to all its neighbours. India has a series of disputes — territorial, economic and political — with all its neighbours. India is not willing to grant concessions or come to compromises on these disputes.

India has a favourable balance of trade with all its neighbours but is not willing to take any steps in terms of granting tariff and non-tariff concessions to remedy this imbalance in favour of the small neighbours. Despite being a regional economic power, it seems to have the additional ambition of being a completely domineering economic power. It takes its neighbours for granted and does not take any special measures to nurture relations with its neighbours in a manner responsive to their needs and sensitivities. India is obsessive in its apprehensions about the smaller neighbours developing extra-regional equations which in India's opinion may affect its security.

The escalating stand-off between India and Pakistan poses a serious threat to regional stability and security. These conceptual threat perceptions of India's neighbours find expression on specifics in India's bilateral relations with them. Dispute on Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan falls in a category by itself. Even otherwise, India has territorial disputes with Nepal (Kalapani issue), and with Bhutan by implication.

India wants Bhutan to settle its border disputes with China in tandem with the Sino-Indian boundary settlement, with Bangladesh (border enclaves still have to be exchanged and finally settled between the two countries, settlement of the rival claims on New Moor islands still hangs fire), with Sri Lanka (about free access for Indian fisherman at Kachchativu Island). India has not settled its maritime boundary with Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Then there are political and economic issues. Bhutan and Nepal desire India to take active interest in resolving their bilateral disputes about the Nepalese expelled from Bhutan and about terrorist activities inside their territories originating from Indian dissident groups. Bangladesh being a base for anti-Indian terrorist activities, the issue of illegal migration of Bangladeshis, the treatment of Hindu

minority in Bangladesh remain issues on which there is a difference of opinion between India and Bangladesh. The Sri Lankan government continues to seek India's endorsement of the ongoing peace initiative with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, but more important, Sri Lanka wishes India to curb support for the LTTE's separatist activities from Tamil Nadu.

In the economic sphere, India's neighbours wish India to give more trade concessions to their exports to redress the imbalance in trade which they have with India. But at the same

misunderstandings and apprehensions and to bring back India's bilateral relations with these countries back on track, to the extent feasible. Sinha assured the Nepalese authorities about India's continuing help to overcome the violence and destabilization generated by Maoist dissidents in that country.

He indicated that India would be willing to discuss all other issues on which there is a difference of opinion with an open mind and with a practical problem-solving approach. Sinha also sought the assistance of Nepal in



time, theirs seems to be a one-sided approach in that they wish India to give concessions but they are not willing to take initiative on their own which will help solve the problem. A case in point is Bangladesh's reluctance to export natural gas to India purely on political grounds despite the proposition being logical and feasible from the economic and technical points of view.

Then there are comprehensions on the part of India about its neighbours having too close a relationship with Pakistan or China in the context of the undercurrents of India's relations with China and Pakistan. The relationships of its neighbours with Pakistan are a matter of particular concern because Pakistan's motives are not just to improve relations with these countries but to utilize these relations to generate negative pressures on India. Pervez Musharraf's visits to Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka which preceded Sinha's visit are assessed by India through the prism of this perception.

Given this critical background, Sinha's visits to neighbouring countries in July and August were timely initiatives to mend fences, to remove

‘Sinha expressed India's willingness to have substantive discussions on pending issues with Bangladesh’

controlling Pakistan-sponsored terrorism originating in Nepalese territory and permeating the Indo-Nepalese border.

In Bangladesh, while giving similar assurances, he made it clear that India has no wish to impose on Bangladesh about export of natural gas from that country. He gave the categorical assurance that it is for Bangladesh to decide on the issue. While India would welcome the supply of natural gas from Bangladesh, if Bangladesh has reservations, then India would resort to other options respecting Bangladesh's sensitivities. Sinha also promised further relaxation of import duties on Bangladesh exports to India. Most significantly, he did not press the

demands which are of interest to India regarding transit facilities or on the issue of illegal migration and so forth.

His extending an invitation to the prime minister of Bangladesh to visit India partially cleared the impression that India has reservations about the government of Begum Khaleda Zia. Here again, he expressed India's willingness to have substantive discussions on pending issues with Bangladesh. The visits to Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives did not involve dealing with any major controversial issues. Here Sinha's line with these countries was that India would be supportive in meeting the political and economic concerns of these countries to the maximum extent, trying to transcend previous technical and narrower perceptions of the Indian government.

With his background of economic diplomacy during his civil service days, and his political experience as the finance minister, Sinha seems to be animated by a certain approach towards regional relations. This appears to be that in his view trained manpower resources, the competitive labour force, the availability of raw materials, natural resources and the large market of the south Asian region should attract other countries of the world to this region. An environment of political stability and a proven capacity for coordinated economic performance within the region are pre-requisites to achieve this. The emergence of democratic political systems, the restructuring of national economics — in conformity with global trends, and the shared attitude of the people of south Asia to move beyond conflict and mutual antagonisms provide the necessary basis for a concerted effort by south Asian countries to meet the above objective.

India has a more complex and difficult role to play in this process, compared to the other countries in the region. It has to reassure its neighbours — while being firm about, and safeguarding its substantial political — security and economic interests. India's predicament is difficult because some of its neighbours judge its *bona fides* towards them on the sole criterion of whether it accepts their suggestions *in toto* for resolving problems affecting its relations with them.

The chemistry of emotions and inherited attitudes and the compulsion of realpolitik combine to create a volatile atmosphere in which all nations are seeking to fashion reasonable institutional mechanisms for meeting their more fundamental aspirations. India, being the largest polity in the region, has to take a lead in forging stable regional equations. It is not unreasonable to speculate that Sinha has initiated a process of reviving both multilateral and bilateral cooperation in south Asia.

Delhi dilemma: To go to Saarc or not

Shaky on who to talk in Pak

SAUMITRA DASGUPTA

Phnom Penh, Nov. 4: India is unable to decide on whether to attend the Saarc summit-level talks scheduled for January next year "because we don't know with whom to talk in Pakistan where no government exists as of now", foreign minister Yashwant Sinha said today.

Sinha said India was prepared to attend Saarc summit-level talks even in Islamabad, but would not allow bilateral issues between India and Pakistan to cloud its deliberations.

"Saarc is a multilateral forum and should discuss multilateral issues," Sinha told a group of journalists attending the first Asean-India summit-level talks that begin here tomorrow.

Saarc and Asean are a study in contrast: both regional forums were formed with the basic objective of establishing closer business and trade relations among the member-countries. While the 10-member Asean has grown into a vibrant trading bloc, the seven-member Saarc has languished.

Sinha said Saarc had failed to meet its basic objectives because its agenda had been hijacked by political issues.

"Saarc is limping and has been unable to make the sort of progress it should have made," he added.

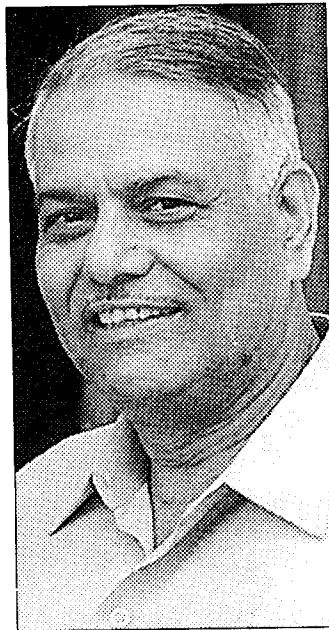
Other regional trade groupings like the European Community, Asean and the North American Free Trade Association (Nafta) had succeeded because they did not deflect from the objectives they

had set for themselves.

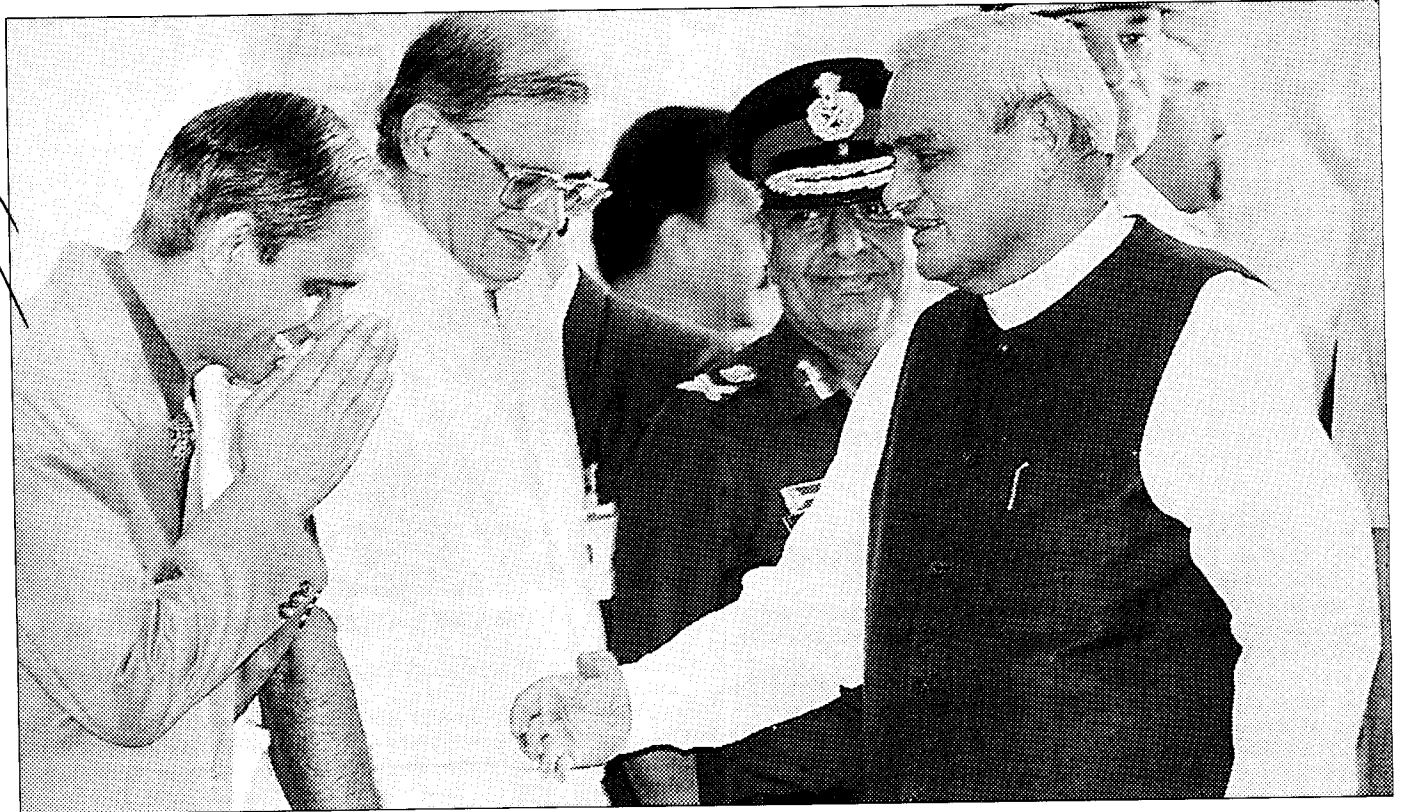
The foreign minister said Pakistan had continued to be obstructive — first by trying to use the forum to raise bilateral issues and then by refusing to extend preferential tariffs to Indian goods in a negation of the spirit of reciprocity.

"Pakistan has used some peculiar logic in providing some preferential tariffs on goods that India does not export; so it's perfectly useless and remains a commitment only on paper," Sinha said.

He said India had been able to cobble a free trade pact with Sri Lanka and was now working to forge one with Bangladesh.



Yashwant Sinha



Cabinet secretary Kamal Pande, Delhi Lt Governor Vijai Kapoor and army chief designate N.C. Vij see off Atal Bihari Vajpayee at Indira Gandhi International airport. The Prime Minister left for Cambodia on Monday. (PTI)

Vajpayee replays parley term

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Nov. 4: A day after two Pakistan-sponsored terrorists were killed in a pre-emptive strike by Delhi police, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has ruled out any talks with Pakistan, asserting that it would not serve any purpose as long as that country foments terrorism.

Responding to a question on the prospect of resuming talks with Pakistan and his attending the January Saarc summit in Islamabad, the Prime Minister said: "Till terrorist activities continue, dialogue (with Pak-

istan) will have no meaning."

Speaking to newsmen at the airport before emplaning for a five-day visit to Cambodia and Laos, the Prime Minister said Delhi has already made its stand very clear that till terrorist activities are stopped, any dialogue with Pakistan would be meaningless.

Asked to comment on the political crisis in Uttar Pradesh, the Prime Minister said he was confident that the crisis would be resolved soon.

The Prime Minister will address the first-ever India-Asean summit in Cambodia tomorrow, focusing on threats posed by ter-

rorism and on greater economic and trade ties. India wants to give a major thrust to cooperation with south-east Asia and the Far-east.

Vajpayee will also discuss with the 10-member Asean, prospects of a free trade area to further strengthen relations with the grouping, besides an Asean integration initiative.

Vajpayee, who visited Cambodia in April this year, would interact with Asean leaders for a comprehensive review of Indo-Asean strategic partnership.

In his departure statement, Vajpayee said India and the Asean countries had a long his-

tory of cultural, social and economic interaction.

"With the recent expansion of Asean, we have an even closer geographical proximity. The upgradation of our dialogue with Asean to the summit-level is a recognition of political, economic and security inter-linkages which we have established particularly over the last decade," he said.

Vajpayee was seen off at the airport by deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, finance minister Jaswant Singh, information and broadcasting minister Sushma Swaraj and several other Cabinet ministers.

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THE TELEGRAPH