

China games on Pak heels

Sino Pak

Beijing, Nov. 14 (Reuters): China and India, building on a new strategic alliance, staged their first joint naval exercise today, just weeks after the Chinese navy held a similar drill with Pakistan.

Nuclear-armed India and China agreed to hold the one-day exercise — and seek a speedy end to a decades-old border dispute — during a visit by Atal Bihari Vajpayee in June, the first by an Indian Prime Minister in a decade.

Ties between the world's two most populous nations, frosty since their brief border war in 1962, have been warming in recent years.

Zhang Minqiu, a professor of international relations at Peking University, said the exercise was a significant step in a long and deliberate process by China to balance its relations with India and traditional ally Pakistan. "I think Pakistan should welcome this policy, India should welcome it. If China supports only one side, it makes relations between them more tense," she said.

Today's naval exercise also marked a "big progress for Sino-Indian ties" given the fact India first proposed similar exercises in the early 1990s, but China declined to engage, she added. "It's an expression of the healthy relations between them."

The exercise, involving three Indian ships, was aimed at ensuring the safety of maritime trade and improving coordination in search-and-rescue at sea, the Indian defence ministry said in a statement.

"India and China are the two most populous countries in the world," the Indian embassy said in a separate statement. "...Our capabilities are well known and provide the opportunity to share experiences and cooperation. Such cooperation will have a



Flag officer commanding of the Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet, Rear Admiral R.P. Suthan, being welcomed in Shanghai on Monday. (PTI)

positive impact not only on the livelihood of our people, but also in the world at large."

The drill comes as China has raised its profile on the world stage, putting a man in space, hosting six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear crisis and managing one of the world's fastest-growing economies. China is to host the Olympic Games in 2008, and India the Commonwealth Games two years later.

China is Pakistan's main supplier of military hardware and analysts believe Beijing also helped Islamabad in its nuclear weapons programme. The China-Pakistan exercises preceded a visit to Beijing by Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf.

But India and China see huge potential in economic ties. Indian imports of Chinese goods by far outstrip India's exports to China, but business leaders be-

lieve Beijing's booming economy will offer an increasingly attractive export market as it opens up to international trade.

Navy chief-US talks

Naval chief Admiral Madhvendra Singh, now in Singapore, has

held extensive interaction with top naval officials from US Seventh Fleet, Chinese South Sea Fleet and others on board *INS Brahmaputra*. The indigenously-made *Brahmaputra* has been turned into the naval chief flagship for the duration of his visit.

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China reaffirms support to Indo-Pak. 'reconciliation'

Silva Pak

By P.S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, NOV. 4. China has reaffirmed "support" for "the process of reconciliation" between New Delhi and Islamabad, even as the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, said in Beijing today that the Kashmir issue could not be sidelined.

The Chinese President, Hu Jintao, told Gen. Musharraf that Beijing would continue to play a "constructive role" in promoting peace as also security and stability in South Asia. According to China's official version of the talks between the two leaders, Mr. Hu underlined how the Sino-Pakistani engagement was based on "mutual trust and support" despite the

changes on the international scene.

Gen. Musharraf, who addressed the students and faculty of the Peking University during his visit, reiterated Pakistan's views on India and the Kashmir issue. As at the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) conference in China's Hainan province two days ago, he identified Kashmir and Palestine as potentially explosive issues.

On the Sino-Pakistan front, the two sides signed a sheaf of documents, including a joint declaration on the future direction of bilateral interactions. The other agreements included those relating to tariff cuts and an expansion of China's mining operations in Pakistan. While the navies of the two countries

had conducted joint exercises, the first for China's Navy with any foreign counterpart, ahead of Gen. Musharraf's visit to Beijing at this time, the issue of nuclear energy cooperation remained in focus, too.

Mr. Hu and Gen. Musharraf pledged to combat Muslim separatist tendencies in China's Xinjiang province, with the latter affirming that his country would never allow any forces, including the "East Turkistan" terrorist campaigners, to use Pakistani territory for anti-China activities. The two leaders vowed to fight extremism, ethnic separatism and terrorism, described as the three forces of evil.

Western diplomats and scholars liken China's strategic

links with Pakistan to those between the United States and Israel in terms of the depth and durability of such ties. Outlining, however, a comprehensive partnership with Pakistan, Mr. Hu informed Gen. Musharraf of a four-point plan of action for a sustainable bilateral relationship.

The four aspects were the continuation of high level contacts, the strengthening of mutually-beneficial cooperation in fields ranging from economy and trade to science and technology, the deepening of links to address non-traditional security concerns, and the efforts to coordinate their policies on regional and larger international affairs.

China to protect Pak sovereignty

Press Trust of India

BEIJING, Nov. 5. — General Pervez Musharraf concluded his China visit today after obtaining assurances from the Chinese leadership on safeguarding Pakistan's "sovereignty and territorial integrity".

"The Chinese side reaffirms that it respects the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan and appreciates and supports the efforts of Pakistan for peaceful resolution of all outstanding issues with neighbours and to safeguard its state sovereignty and independence," said the first ever joint declaration between the two countries, issued late last night. APP, Pakistan's official media, quoted Chinese premier Mr Wen Jiabao as saying: "I am sure, you (President Musharraf) will be leaving China

with the reassurance of the continued commitment of the new Chinese leadership for the progress, prosperity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan."

The stress on Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the joint declaration assumes significance in the wake of recent statements by the Indian leadership with regard to Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir and would have cheered President Musharraf, specially given China's reluctance to take sides on Kashmir.

Meanwhile, Intelligence reports received by the British government have indicated that Al-Qaida members were re-grouping in Pakistan and using Kashmir as a recruiting ground, a report added from London.

Back in Beijing, the only public statement Gen Musharraf could elicit from Chinese leaders on Kashmir was during his meeting with

Peace moves in pieces

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 5. — The new Indian peace initiatives would figure in discussions that Pakistani foreign secretary Mr Riaz Khokhar would have with US officials during his two-day visit to Washington beginning 13 November, the Pakistani foreign office indicated today. Also today, Pakistani information minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said he would deliver a "peace message" to Indian leaders when he travels to New Delhi this weekend. — PTI

President Hu Jintao (also general secretary of Communist Party of China) on Monday. That too was mundane. The only apparent setback for Gen Musharraf was failing to sign the deal on the second phase of Chashma nuclear power plant. It could have been a major highlight of his China visit.

China, Pak to seal nuke plant deal

Islamabad, Nov. 2 (Reuters): Pakistan is expected to finalise a deal with China for the construction of a nuclear power plant, officials said today, the second such plant to be built with the help of Beijing.

The agreement for the construction of the 300 megawatt nuclear power plant is expected to be signed during the visit of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to China.

"Yes, absolutely there is a possibility," foreign office spokesperson Masood Khan said when asked whether the agreement would be finalised during the visit.

The nuclear plant will be constructed at Chashma on the banks of the Indus River, around 280 km south of Islamabad and alongside the first plant that China helped to build, which has a similar capacity.

Khan said China had agreed in principle to build a second nuclear power plant during the visit of Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali to Beijing in March.

He said the financing details of the project had yet to be worked out.

Energy experts say the project is estimated to cost \$600 million and will take at least six years to complete.

The first Chashma nuclear power plant was built in 1999 and was connected to the national power grid in early 2000.

The US has repeatedly urged China to halt nuclear cooperation with Pakistan, but both Beijing and Islamabad insist that they are not working together for any military purposes.

Khan said the nuclear power plant would be constructed under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"It will be meant for civilian use of nuclear energy."

Pakistan set up its first nuclear power station in 1972 in the the port city of Karachi with Canadian help. The Karachi plant has a capacity of 137 megawatts.

Western countries, under pressure from the US, later halted nuclear cooperation with Pakistan, suspecting that Islamabad was clandestinely developing nuclear weapons.

Pakistan vowed to go nuclear after rival India exploded its first nuclear device in 1974.

Pakistan conducted five nuclear tests just weeks after India carried out three such tests in May 1998.

Beijing is the main supplier of military hardware to Islamabad.

Musharraf's three-day visit to China ending on Tuesday comes on the heels of unprecedented joint naval exercises between the two countries.

The three-day exercises, which ended last month, were China's first with the navy of a foreign country.

Musharraf joins China's war on separatists

Beijing, Nov. 3 (Reuters): The leaders of China and Pakistan pledged to battle separatist Muslims campaigning for an independent Chinese homeland while inking economic deals aimed at boosting trade ties, state media said today.

In his first meeting with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf since taking power, Chinese President Hu Jintao said both nations must battle the "three forces" of extremism, ethnic separatism and terrorism, China's Central Television (CCTV) said.

Hu also called on Pakistan and China to step up their fight against transnational crime and drug smuggling, it added.

Pakistan stood resolutely against terrorism and did not enable any anti-China forces — including ethnic Uighurs seeking independence for China's northwestern Xinjiang region — to use Pakistan as a base, CCTV quoted Musharraf as saying.

China has said small numbers of separatist Muslims from Xinjiang have trained in al Qaida camps in Pakistan.

Musharraf's visit comes on the heels of joint naval exercises between Pakistan and China, its main supplier of military hardware, off the coast of Shanghai late last month. Those exercises were China's first with a foreign navy. China's foreign ministry said the visit would help strengthen ties with Pakistan, a long-standing ally and friend.

"You are an old friend of the



Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf salutes as he walks past Chinese models during the Boao Forum in Hainan, southern China. (AP)

Chinese people, and for many years you have worked for the development of our friendship and cooperation," Hu told Musharraf. The two countries also signed a string of economic agreements to bolster trade ties including one facilitating Pakistani mango exports to the booming China economy.

But no mention was made of a multi-million dollar agreement for Chinese help in building a nuclear power plant in Pakistan, expected to have been finalised following Musharraf's tour to a southern Chinese island where he attended the Boao

Forum for Asia. Energy experts say that the 300-megawatt nuclear power project, agreed in principle during a visit by Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali to Beijing in March, is estimated to cost \$600 million and will take at least six years to complete. The US has repeatedly urged China to stop its nuclear cooperation with Pakistan, but both Beijing and Islamabad say they are not working together for military purposes.

Pakistan conducted five nuclear tests just weeks after India carried out three such tests in May 1998.

China urges Pak to suppress militants

IMTIAZ GUL

Islamabad, Sept. 5: A seven-member Chinese delegation left for Beijing today after reviewing anti-terror and security measures with Pakistani officials.

Led by a deputy minister of public security, Yang Huanning, the delegation held talks with interior minister Faisal Saleh Hayat, secretary interior Tasneem Noorani, chairman joint chiefs of staff General Muhammad Aziz Khan, officials of the Intelligence Bureau and the ISI.

A Chinese embassy official here said the talks were part of the annual consultations on security matters. However, Pakistani officials said the talks centred on Beijing's recent offer of support to Islamabad in combating terrorism and eliminating international crimes.

"The two countries have decided to establish a joint working group to enhance border security and check smuggling," the of-

icial said, adding that Pakistan would like to address Chinese concerns regarding activities of Muslim militants in China's western province of Sinkiang.

Beijing has been concerned over the presence of Muslim militants in the province, which,

Islamabad F-16 hunt

Islamabad, Sept. 5 (Reuters): Pakistan, worried by India's plans to acquire a strategic radar system from Israel, today said it is seeking second-hand F-16 fighters from Belgium and will also request a similar US radar system.

Air Commodore Sarfraz Ahmed Khan, spokesperson for the Pakistan air force, said an Airborne Early Warning System would be on Pakistan's shopping list when the US-Pakistani defence consultative group meets in Washington. Khan said Pakistan would also repeat its request for the supply of an initial 28 F-16 aircraft the US refused to deliver in the 1990s due to concerns about Islamabad's nuclear programme.

the Chinese authorities believe, draws support from radicals living in the Pakistani border regions.

Beijing also wants Islamabad to intensify border surveillance and stop these elements from sneaking into Chinese territory.

The issue of cross-border

movement of Sinkiang Muslims has been an irritant between the two countries. However, observers say Beijing has not allowed the issue to affect bilateral ties between the two countries. Instead, it has reiterated the offer of support in the name of war against terrorism.

Islamabad and Beijing had signed a memorandum of understanding during Pakistan Prime Minister Zafarullah Jamali's visit to China earlier this year.

The MoU outlines a modus operandi for enhanced cooperation between the two countries in the areas of border security.

According to the *Dawn* newspaper, France, Germany and Britain are also ready to offer help to Pakistan to tackle militancy.

"We have succeeded in dismantling the al Qaida network to a considerable extent, but I admit that the government has not been able to thoroughly eliminate this international terrorist outfit from our part of the world," the *Dawn* quoted interior minister Faisal Saleh Hayat as saying. The minister added that part of a \$3 billion package pledged by the US during President Pervez Musharraf's visit to Washington will be spent on anti-terrorism activities.

The Pakistan army has already received five helicopters in addition to six C-130s the US has promised to deliver soon. Fencing of the border with Afghanistan and surveillance equipment are also part of the assistance that the US government has provided to Pakistan in return for its active involvement in the anti-terror campaign.