

India seeks 'humane' trial for Saddam

NILOVA ROY CHAUDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Dec. 20.— Though not joining the chorus of international opinion on how the trial of Saddam Hussein should be conducted, India hopes the trial will be conducted in Iraq. Though reticent on articulating India's position since last week's capture of the former Iraqi President, the government said it hoped Mr Hussein's arrest would lead to stabilisation of the law and order situation in that country and an early transfer of power to the Iraqis.

External affairs minister Mr Yashwant Sinha said there was no pressure again on the government after the arrest to send troops to Iraq. There has been no request from the

US-appointed Iraqi Governing Council for troops, officials said, and added that the government would abide by its 14 July decision to not send combat troops to that country.

Having "taken note" of the arrest of Mr Hussein, Mr Sinha said: "The judicial process will have to address issues such as the rights of Iraqi nationals, the obligation of occupying powers under the Geneva Convention, the need for transparency, humane treatment, and the fairness of the judicial process." "We believe," Mr Sinha told Parliament earlier this week, "that it is essentially a question of the Iraqis; it is for the Iraqi people to decide, but in conformity with well-known international norms and principles."

India keen to avert split on Zimbabwe

ASHIS CHAKRABARTI

Abuja (Nigeria), Dec. 5: India is keen to play a major role in preventing a division in the Commonwealth over the issue of Zimbabwe's re-entry to its councils. The issue has seen major African members uniting against Britain, Australia, Canada and other white nations.

The lifting of the suspension on Zimbabwe, imposed in March, 2002, following President Robert Mugabe's subversion of democracy and human rights, is likely to be the major issue at the

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (Chogm), which began here this morning.

India's external affairs minister, Yashwant Sinha, told the visiting Indian mediapersons here today that India did not want the Commonwealth to be "divided on this issue, and certainly not on ethnic-racial lines".

It should not become an "Africa-versus-white Anglo-Saxon issue".

President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, who is the chair-

man of the current, four-day summit here, today set up a six-member group, comprising India, Jamaica, South Africa, Mozambique, Australia and Canada, to look into the Zimbabwe issue afresh and report to the Chogm's plenary tomorrow. Heads of government will then consider the report during their retreat later tomorrow.

A separate group, comprising Nigeria, South Africa and Australia, was set up by Commonwealth leaders earlier this year to discuss the Zimbabwe issue.

But, despite a large number of African countries favouring Zimbabwe's return to the councils, this group did not go for a change of the current position. Many of these African nations are believed to be working at the current Chogm for a review of the decision to keep Zimbabwe out.

Many African countries do not share the Anglo-Saxon nations' perceptions of democratic politics and human rights.

Although Obasanjo visited Mugabe recently, he is said to still have reservations about the

situation in Zimbabwe. There are, however, some other African nations and many civil liberties groups who want the ban on Mugabe's "oppressive regime" to stay. Nigeria itself, however, remains embroiled in a controversy over the former Liberian dictator, Charles Taylor, who fled his country last August and took asylum in Nigeria.

Although the Interpol has issued an arrest notice on him, Obasanjo has declined to hand Taylor over.

However, the Conference of Nigerian Political Parties

(CNPP), in an open letter, have urged Chogm leaders to persuade Obasanjo to hand over Taylor to the UN. According to the CNPP, Taylor was responsible for the murder of some 3,000 Nigerian soldiers who had been in Liberia for peace-keeping missions.

New Delhi gears up for Mission Iraq

Recce team to set out this month

By Siddharth Varadarajan
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A high-level Indian delegation will visit US-occupied Iraq later this month to decide—after making an on-the-spot assessment of the prevailing security situation there—whether New Delhi should begin implementing its offers of political and humanitarian assistance to that country.

And though external affairs ministry officials deny any rethinking on the question of sending Indian troops to Iraq, diplomatic circles here are abuzz with fresh speculation. The last time the US asked, the Vajpayee government cited the ongoing tension with Pakistan as a reason for not being able to spare troops. But with a ceasefire along the LoC now in place, presumably with some help from Washington, the US is once again looking at India with a questioning eye.

The dates for the visit are still being finalised but the Indian delegation, to be headed by MEA secretary R.M. Abhyankar, is likely to be in Iraq from December 17 to 21. "The idea is to establish close contacts with the Iraqi governing council (IGC)," an MEA official said. India is keen to firm up the planned visit to New Delhi of the IGC's Kurdish head, Jalal Talabani, and also register its presence on the Iraqi oil scene.

But Mr Abhyankar's main task, given the increasing attacks on foreign troops, diplomats and aid workers in Iraq, will be to evaluate how safe the situation is for the growing number of Indians working there. And also to assess the kind of reception Indian troops could expect should they ever be deployed there as peacekeepers.

The MEA estimates that

there are as many as 2,000 Indians currently in Iraq in various capacities—both on PSU projects and in their individual capacity.

A key issue to be settled is whether the 77 army doctors and medical staff India has promised for a maternity hospital in Najaf can proceed to Iraq. As of now, the \$10 million project is still "on hold" given the threat perception. India's plan to send across 50 metric tonnes of milk powder has also hit a road block with the World Food Programme—the only agency capable of distributing this aid—pulling out of Iraq.

While Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's role was decisive in rebuffing the US request for troops earlier this year, MEA sources say the opposition put up by Kanwal Sibal, the outgoing foreign secretary, was also crucial. "Now that Mr Sibal has left, it is possible someone may try and push the issue again," a South Block source said.

India is closely watching what the UN is going to do in Iraq and whether its humanitarian agencies plan to return there soon.

Baghdad beckons



- MEA secretary R.M. Abhyankar will lead high-level team to America-occupied Iraq to study the ground situation
- Speculation abuzz about change in Delhi's stand on sending troops

PM to attend CHOGM summit

By Our Special Correspondent
D. F. ...
10/3/02

NEW DELHI, DEC. 2. The Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, will attend the summit of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) at Abuja (Nigeria) from December 4 to 7. However, his bilateral visit to Ghana after the summit has been dropped "because of Parliamentary preoccupations back in New Delhi."

The new Foreign Secretary, Shashank, told presspersons here today that the Prime Minister had decided to attend the summit because of "India's deep commitment to the Commonwealth" and the fact that India is its largest member and the fourth biggest financial contributor.

On the agenda is the consideration of a report by a high-level group of internationally-renowned economists on "Making democracy work for pro-poor development." The high-level group is headed by the former Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh, and, apart from other economists, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are also associated.

On the possibility of lifting Pakistan's suspension from the Commonwealth, Mr. Shashank said the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), which worked on the basis of consensus, would decide the matter. However, he said the Commonwealth had taken note of the fact that because of the Legal Framework Order in Pakistan, its Parliament remained deadlocked.

India's Afghan stakes

By M.K. Bhadrakumar

India's neglect of its historical partners in Afghanistan, the Pashtuns, is inexcusable. Resetting policy parameters is not going to be easy.

18/11
HD-10

THE PRIME Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, during his recent summit meeting with the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, put in perspective the gravity of the developments in Afghanistan. He was quoted as saying, "Events in Afghanistan cause anxiety, there exists the threat of the Taliban's return" in one form or the other.

The Declaration on Global Challenges and Threats to World Security and Stability signed by the two statesmen in Moscow on November 12 called for giving up "double standards" in the war against terrorism and for adopting a "consistent and uncompromising" approach. It stressed the imperative of promoting confidence among members of the "anti-terrorist coalition" by giving due consideration to the interests of each one of them. It reiterated, "Afghanistan should emerge as a peaceful, strong, prosperous, united and independent nation that would be free from external interference and living in harmony with its neighbours".

Tajikistan was Mr. Vajpayee's next destination after the Russia visit. This carried much political symbolism. Tajikistan used to be a frontline state in the resistance to the Taliban. The Joint Declaration issued on November 14 in Dushanbe following talks between Mr. Vajpayee and the Tajik President, Emomali Rakhmonov, called for an Afghanistan free from outside interference, and expressed concern at the challenges to security being mounted by the Taliban and Al-Qaeda elements "with support from outside."

India has been in the forefront of the "war on terror" in Afghanistan. India was the first country to offer military bases for the Anglo-American forces to launch the war. India made this unilateral offer on the basis of its confidence that it had shared interests with Washington over Taliban regime's overthrow — confidence that presumably accrued through South Block's intense interaction with the United States at the ministerial level and within the forum of Indo-U.S. Working Group, during the two-year period from end-1999.

When the Afghan war was "won" with unexpected ease in October

2001, BJP government leaders jubilantly bracketed the Taliban's spectacular "defeat" with the on-going Diwali festivities.

Following up, in December, at the Bonn conference, India played a useful role for the Americans in cajoling Northern Alliance groups to accept a certain calculus of power in Kabul for the post-Taliban era, which, left to themselves, these groups were wary of. India followed up by undertaking an unprecedented commitment of hundreds of millions of dollars for Afghanistan's reconstruction. India expanded its diplomatic presence to a historic level by opening consulates in southern, southeastern, western and northern regions of Afghanistan. All this signalled India's resolve to be a serious protagonist. India felt it had a "win-win" situation.

However, sometime around June last year, following changes at the helm of the foreign policy establishment in South Block, India began to sense that complex emergent geopolitical realities engendered by Afghan war demanded new thinking. Meanwhile, layers of ambiguity about the war also began to peel off.

Actually, the political objective of Afghan war was never in doubt except for those willing to suspend disbelief. On October 16, 2001, even before Taliban's "defeat" was complete, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, had underlined in Islamabad at a joint press conference with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, that although the Taliban regime headed by Mullah Mohammed Omar must be eliminated, there would be room in Afghanistan's future government for "moderate" Taliban leaders since the term "Taliban" did not just mean "Afghan regime." Mr. Powell agreed with Gen. Musharraf's contention that Northern Alliance should not replace the Taliban regime. He said, "It (Taliban) also defines a group of individuals, a group of people. If you got rid of the regime, there would still be people who might find the teachings, feelings, and beliefs of

that movement still very important. And to the extent that they are willing to participate in the development of a new Afghan assembly with everybody being represented, we would have to listen to them."

Clearly, as the Prussian military philosopher, Carl von Clausewitz, would have put it, Afghan war was not as "absolute" as the BJP-led Government imagined nor was the "law of the extreme," namely, a savage destruction of Taliban, ever in the Pentagon's consideration; war was meant to be a "passing evil", a temporary loss of power for Taliban in Kabul which would be repaired by political combinations, bargaining and coalition formation.

Details have emerged that months ago, with American acquiescence and Pakistani mediation, a dialogue between Hamid Karzai, Chairman of Afghan Transitional Authority, and "moderate" Taliban leaders had begun. Clearer contours of Mr. Karzai's (and American) willingness to engage the Taliban are appearing. Select Taliban leaders will be shortly inducted into Mr. Karzai's cabinet. Pakistan has commended Mr. Karzai's statesmanship in embarking on a path of "national reconciliation". Pakistan feels vindicated that Mr. Karzai and Americans are simultaneously moving in the direction of "downsizing" Northern Alliance, which was Islamabad's *bête noire*.

Taliban's rise, like a phoenix out of the ashes of the Afghan war, poses policy challenges for South Block. Our original sin lies in our ambivalence towards geopolitical factors which had inspired the Taliban's conception; our consequent inability to comprehend the Taliban's true alchemy; our inexcusable neglect of our historical partners, the Pashtuns, in Afghanistan; our regrettable predilection to view Afghanistan exclusively from the picturesque Panjshir valley; and, of course, the excessive zeal shown by the BJP-led Government, in the first half of its incumbency at least, to harmonise policies on any given front with Washington's thinking.

Resetting the Afghan policy parameters is not going to be easy for India. There has been a paradigm shift. The American unilateralist intervention in the Afghan question that would have been unthinkable till September 11, 2001, is today a veritable reality. The United Nations has mandated it. It carries the NATO's imprimatur and escutcheons of legitimacy under international law. Mr. Karzai enjoys American backing. Thus, if U.S. and Pakistan have jointly finessed "moderate" Taliban elements and are about to reintroduce them into mainstream Afghan politics, and if that is also what suits Mr. Karzai, what can anybody do about it?

For Washington, a success story out of Afghanistan is a priority. Forces on the ground may yet frustrate such an easy outcome, but it is unrealistic to imagine that any regional power would actively encourage these forces and risk annoying the Americans. In any case, the Northern Alliance's disarray is so advanced that "anti-Taliban resistance" cannot be resurrected. Old dividing lines between Afghan factions (or regional powers) are also disappearing.

India needs an overhaul of policy. Touch-ups are inadequate. International opinion is differentiating Taliban from "neo-Taliban". India cannot remain rooted to a dogmatic definition of the Taliban as Islam's uncompromising face. The Taliban was a cauldron in which many entrails brewed. It even contained remnants of Khalqi army officers of the communist regime who were trained in Dehra Dun. Admittedly, for fresh thinking to be possible, we need to come to terms with our handling of the hijack incident of 2000 in Kandahar.

Thirdly, we must "reengage" the Pashtuns equally with other ethnic groups. Our links with the Pashtuns run down to Rampur, Bhopal and Mysore — some would say, they hark back to the creation of the Vedas.

In geopolitics, honest cost-benefit analysis becomes necessary. If the Afghan problem were to be reduced to a timeserving war of attrition with Pakistani intelligence, we would be wastefully emulating Pakistan's grotesque discredited policies.

Towards the near west

PRIME MINISTER Vajpayee has concluded a significant tour of Russia, Tajikistan and Syria. I use the word "significant" for two reasons. First, after a decade of restructuring new equations with the Russian Federation, last week's trip signalled a stabilising and measured expansion in bilateral ties. Second, the visit to Tajikistan and Syria is a reflection of India attaching much needed importance to its relations with important countries in Central and West Asia.

The context in which Vajpayee's visit took place is critical. Russia and India are deeply interested and involved in the stabilisation of Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the countries of Central Asia from Azerbaijan to Kyrgyzstan. Russia wishes to retain its influence in Central Asia in the face of growing US-led presence of West European countries in the region.

India has a security and economic stake in the region, given its market potential and energy resources. There is also a broader convergence of interests between Russia and India. Both are opposed to religious fanaticism. Both face challenges to their territorial integrity by separatist movements fuelled by religious extremism (Chechnya and Jammu and Kashmir). Both share concerns about cross-border terrorism. Both are concerned about the unilateralism implicit in America's foreign and security policies. Both are worried about the marginalisation of the UN and erosion of the multilateral processes of maintaining peace and security on the basis of international consensus.

Despite their political, strategic and economic limitations, India and Russia have reservations about a unipolar world order. This convergence of views and interests on macro-level issues is strengthened by equally substantive mutuality of interests in the bilateral context. Russia remains



Central Asia is once again on India's diplomatic map

J. N. DIXIT

an important supplier of defence equipment. The potential of Indo-Russian cooperation to ensure energy security for both is concrete and positive.

Despite its adherence to many of the international regimes regarding transfer of technologies, particularly dual use technology, Russia has been much more forthcoming than most other countries in meeting India's technology requirements — not only in terms of transfer of technology on a commercial basis but also in joint development of technologies responsive to the commercial infrastructural requirements of both countries.

The economies of the Russian Federation and India are mutu-

ally complementary in terms of bilateral trade, a phenomenon which, with the passage of time, is characterised by increasing volumes and an incrementally diversified commodity structure. This cooperation is particularly useful to both in the peaceful uses of space and nuclear technologies. Russia has been generally supportive of India's policy orientations towards Pakistan and on the J&K issue. Compared to the comparative ambivalence of Boris Yeltsin towards India, President Vladimir Putin seems more convinced about the importance of political, economic and strategic equations with India.

Both Russia and India share critical concerns about develop-

ments in Iraq and Afghanistan after the US-led military operations in these two countries. Both are concerned about the punitive attitude of the US towards countries like Syria and Iran, with whom both have close relations.

So apart from being an annual consultation at the summit level agreed upon between Putin and Vajpayee, this trip has additional significance in this contextual background. The two leaders issued a joint declaration and signed 10 agreements. These cover the spheres of science and technology, space, earthquake research, bilateral trade and defence supplies.

It is relevant to mention that Indo-Russian trade has suffered some stagnation. The to-

Some dark spots too must be noted. There is no categorical assurance of Russian support to India in the context of UN reforms or a permanent seat in the Security Council. While Russia has endorsed the pre-condition of ending cross-border terrorism for resumption of dialogue with Pakistan, unlike during Soviet times, there is no articulated support for J&K being an integral part of India. Besides, cooperation in space and nuclear energy would be subject to Russia's equations with the US in various international regimes. Fortunately, India's capacity for self-reliance in these two spheres cuts its dependence on any foreign country.

Vajpayee's visits to Syria and Tajikistan are of high significance. India's equation with the Tajik government of President Rakhmanov is important in dealing with Afghanistan developments and countering Islamic extremism in Central Asia. The visit follows Defence Minister George Fernandes's earlier visit to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha too was in Tashkent this month. The neglect of Central Asia in India's foreign policy over the last five-six years seems to be rectified.

Vajpayee Syria visit affirms India's reservations about unilateral and at times illogical, preemptive orientations of US policies in West Asia. The two countries are keen to facilitate cooperation in information technology and biotechnology. ONGC (Videsh) too is expected to collaborate with Syrian companies to prospect for oil.

Vajpayee's visit manifests an integrated orientation in India's foreign policy, in creating political equations with the extended Asian neighbourhood. A broader strategic vision is again animating India's foreign policy, a vision which was initiated by Rajiv Gandhi and Narasimha Rao more than a decade ago.

Vajpayee's visit reflects an integrated orientation in India's foreign policy in creating political equations with the extended Asian neighbourhood

tal volume is only of the order of \$1.5 billion, compared to the much higher volumes of trade India has with the US, China and the EU. The prime minister's visit will hopefully provide a needed impulse.

ONGC (Videsh) has invested nearly \$2 billion in the Sakhalin-I oil and gas project. Russia is helping India build two nuclear reactors in Tamil Nadu. It is also interested in inputs from India in information technology. There has been much speculation about defence cooperation and the purchase of aircraft carrier Gorchkov. Cooperation in missile technology has a continuity which is of importance both for peaceful and defence purposes.

Atal gives Syria Israel, takes Pak

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Damascus, Nov. 16: India today strongly opposed Israeli action against Syria, which reciprocated by supporting a bilateral resolution of the India-Pakistan problem.

In a joint statement, issued here at the conclusion of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit, India "emphasised that action against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria as happened last month is not acceptable". This was a direct response to the Israeli bombing

on the outskirts of Damascus in October.

If this was the "give" on India's part, the "take" was in Syria condemning "all acts of terrorism of which they (India and Syria) have been victims".

There was some disquiet in Indian quarters that President Bashar al Assad, at his *iftar* banquet, had called for a just solution in South Asia respecting "the rights of all sides".

Any worry that Syria might be equivocating on Pakistan and Kashmir was, therefore, set to rest today.

Syria ended up welcoming India's peace initiative with Pakistan.

It went on to say that the issues between India and Pakistan should be settled bilaterally through a dialogue and in the framework provided under the Simla Agreement of 1972 and the Lahore Declaration of 1999.

This is what India wanted and this is what it managed to get from one of the most important Arab countries.

The visit also helped Vajpayee and Assad, 40 years younger,

to strike a rapport, adds PTI.

The President reflected the warmth in the ties by driving to the Prime Minister's hotel to see him off on a sightseeing tour. Vajpayee took time off his schedule to visit top tourist destinations — the great mosque in the heart of Damascus and the ancient ruins at Palmyra to which he flew in Assad's special aircraft.

Prime Minister Mohammad Naji Otri and all his cabinet colleagues saw off Vajpayee, the first Indian premier to visit Syria in 15 years, at the airport

in a break from protocol.

Referring to his extensive talks with the Syrian President on West Asia and Iraq, Vajpayee said: "We remain concerned at the continuing cycle of violence and counter-violence in the region."

In a statement before flying back home after his six-day trip to Russia, Tajikistan and Syria, Vajpayee said it has given a fresh impetus to bilateral cooperation with these "important countries" in regions of great political, economic and strategic significance to India.

Indo-EU summit to focus on Iraq, terror

Damascus backs Delhi's peace gestures

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 16. — Terrorism, the Iraq situation and Afghanistan along with economic issues will dominate the fourth India-European Union summit on 29 November.

Because of this summit foreign affairs remains high on Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's agenda after his "highly successful" tri-national tour (of Russia, Tajikistan and Syria), although he is currently taken up with domestic campaign for the 1 December elections.

The Italian Prime Minister, Mr Silvio Berlusconi, (Italy currently holds the EU chair) will visit the country for the summit. Italian ambassador to India, Mr Benedetto Amari said, "A joint declaration on terrorism is likely to be signed by Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee."

The EU is divided on the present Iraq situation and lively discussions are likely, diplomats indicated. The EU President, Mr Romano Prodi, and the High Representative for the EU, Mr Javier Solana, are expected to be present.

Part of the formalised institutional set-up, the EU-India Business summit will be on the day before the political summit with the participation of top CEOs from India and the EU member nations. The forum will discuss tourism, food processing, chemicals and pharmaceuticals. Agreements on information technology, tourism, agro and food processing, chemicals and pharmaceuticals are on the anvil.

DAMASCUS, Nov. 16. — India and Syria today condemned all acts of terrorism and emphasised that it should not be linked to any religion. Damascus supported New Delhi's initiative to foster good relations with Pakistan.

In a joint statement issued at the end of Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit, Syria supported resolution of Indo-Pak problems in the spirit of the 1972 Simla Agreement and the 1999 Lahore Declaration.

The statement comes a day after the Prime Minister held wide-ranging talks with the Syrian President, Mr Bashar Al Assad. Assuring the Arab world, Mr Vajpayee told his host said India supports the Palestinian cause and wants an early restoration of sovereignty to the people of Iraq.

Israel, he said, should withdraw its forces from Palestinian cities as well as other occupied lands, including Syria's Golan Heights.

Before winding up his visit, Mr Vajpayee took time off to visit tourist destinations such as Omayyad



Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, accompanied by his Syrian counterpart Mohammed Najji Otri, meet the imam of Omayyad Mosque in Damascus on Sunday. — PTI

Mosque in Damascus and the ancient ruins at Palmyra, which he flew by President Assad's special aircraft.

In his departure statement, Mr Vajpayee said his visit to

Reiterating India's commitment to the West Asia peace process, the Prime Minister called for "full implementation" of UN resolutions on the issue. "I reiterate India's continued commitment to the peace process, and to a comprehensive and lasting peace, based on full implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions." — PTI

Atal spells out Iraq, Israel stand

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Damascus, Nov. 15: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee told Syria today that India wants sovereignty in Iraq to be handed over to the Iraqi people as early as possible.

While expressing grave concern over the situation in Iraq and West Asia, Vajpayee also set at rest any apprehension that India's growing closeness to Israel and America might lead to its abandoning of its Arab friends.

Vajpayee was only reiterating India's policy towards the region. But what was important was the place and the timing.

Vajpayee's visit comes two months after the visit of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to India and at a time when the US Congress has approved further sanctions against Syria. That Vajpayee has gone ahead with the visit in the holy month of Ra-

mazan is a pointer to how important India considers its relationship with the Arab world in general and Syria and Palestine in particular.

In his meetings today, Vajpayee told President Bashar Al Assad that there had been no change in India's policy towards West Asia; that it was "fully with the Palestinian cause" and called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian cities and other occupied territories. The occupied territories include Golan Heights that belongs to Syria.

The Prime Minister enumerated the Indian position in his speech at an *iftar* hosted by Assad later in the evening, saying: "We have consistently called for comprehensive and lasting peace based on full implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397 and 497, and the Land for Peace principle."

Briefing reporters about the

restricted-level talks between Vajpayee and Assad, external affairs minister Yashwant Sinha said: "The Prime Minister told President Assad that the Indian position on Palestine and the occupied territories had been made clear to Sharon during his visit to New Delhi."

The Indian position on West Asia is in consonance with that of Syria that has twice started negotiations through US mediation in the 1990s. The talks fell apart amid mutual accusations and in the wake of the Israeli elections of May 1996. Syria even now lives in constant fear of Israel. Only a few months ago, Israeli planes bombed an area outside Damascus, an attack that India condemned.

Assad expressed happiness with the visit and, according to Sinha, repeatedly referred to the fact that the Syrians looked at India as a "role model" for the

countries of the south.

India, Assad apparently said, had played a stabilising role in the international arena and that, along with China, Russia and Europe, it should provide the leadership for resolving the problems being faced by the world today. He agreed with Vajpayee that the earlier sovereignty in Iraq is handed over to the Iraqis, the better it would be for all concerned.

Describing India-Syria ties as "good and friendly", Vajpayee said more substance needed to be added to the relations. He suggested enhanced cooperation in the fields of hydrocarbon, railways, power generation and transmission, agriculture and biotechnology.

India also announced a new line of credit to Syria of \$25 million and an outright grant of \$1 million for the Syrian National Biotechnology Centre.

PM's Syria visit a success, nine agreements inked

T.J.S. GEORGE
DAMASCUS | NOVEMBER 15

A NOTICEABLY upgraded airport reception led by three Cabinet ministers welcomed Prime Minister Vajpayee to this Syrian capital on Friday night. There was then a mile-long motorcade to his hotel. These indicated the unusual importance Syria is attaching to the visit of the Indian Prime Minister, the first in 15 years.

The substance of the visit was out in the open. Nine bilateral agreements signed before lunch promised to break



new ground in the economic and cultural relations between the countries. More than that, there seemed an emotional bond that put the relations well above the mundane. This came through during the talks the two leaders

had this morning. President Bashar al-Assad told Vajpayee that India, with the way it had developed, had become the role model for countries of the South.

Against this closeness of the spirit, the agreements seemed but matters of detail. Yet, some of them were of far-reaching implications. For the first time, India has extended to Syria a line of credit worth US\$ 25 million. This is in addition to a \$ 1 m grant for the establishment of the Syrian National Biotechnology Centre with Indian expertise.

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India's CBMs made under global pressure: Pak.

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 11. Even as his Cabinet colleague and Information Minister, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, was at his charming best in New Delhi, the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, surprised observers by launching a diatribe against India and maintained that the recent confidence building measures (CBMs) by Delhi were made under global pressure.

Addressing a specially convened press conference to brief on his just concluded tour of European Union countries, Mr. Kasuri was particularly harsh on the Indian proposal to run a bus service between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar.

"On the one hand India says that Pakistan is indulging in cross-border terrorism, on the other hand they are suggesting a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. Probably they want the terrorists to travel in style and comfort," he quipped.

Mr. Kasuri is an ardent advocate of normalisation of ties between India and Pakistan and was seen at times in the last one year in office at odds with his Foreign Office.

In the face of provocative statements from some of the

functionaries in the Vajpayee Government, Mr. Kasuri had kept his cool and preferred not to join issues.

It is against this backdrop that his cutting at the press meet surprised many. Mr. Kasuri said India could not be serious about allegations of cross-border infiltration if it is offering the bus service across Kashmir, and went on to assert that it was impossible for the Pakistan forces to completely seal the Line of Control (LoC).

"All activity cannot be actually stopped. No country in the world can do that. How can Pakistan do that? You cannot seal a border as large as that," he argued. The only way of stopping the rebel flow was through dialogue between Pakistan and India on Kashmir, he said.

"The only guarantee for complete sealing of the border is that there should be no incentive for people to cross the border... That can come through negotiations, dialogue with the Government of Pakistan to discuss and settle the outstanding issue of Jammu and Kashmir," he maintained.

He did pay compliments to the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, as a "man of peace" but at the same time hinted that he was stymied by hardliners.

India and Sino-Pak. ties

By C. Raja Mohan

140-10
6/11

BEFORE HEADING off to China last weekend, the President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, described the relations between the two countries as "excellent, strategic and permanent". This is a characterisation many in the Indian strategic community would agree entirely with. Just as the Pakistani establishment celebrates the "all-weather, time tested" ties between Islamabad and Beijing, the Indian sceptics on China rule out any real advance in the Beijing's positions on issues that divide India and Pakistan.

There is no doubt that one of the central features of the geopolitics in our region over the last five decades has been the enduring strategic partnership between China and Pakistan. But is the past a reliable guide to the future triangular relationship between China, India and Pakistan? Not necessarily.

As elsewhere in life, change is the only permanent feature of international relations. There is no doubt today about one new reality in the region — the emergence for the first time in decades of a robust and rapidly expanding Sino-Indian relationship. Will this simple fact make a difference to how China's ties with Pakistan will evolve in the future? One view suggests that over the long term, an intensifying relationship between India and China would inevitably have an effect on the ties between Beijing and Islamabad. The other, more dominant, view is that all the improvements in Sino-Indian relations put together cannot overwhelm the geopolitical value of Pakistan to China — as a local balancer against India, a gateway to the Islamic world, and a valuable partner in a volatile region where Beijing has many interests.

India's current enthusiasm for engaging China is not based on expectations of an immediate change in the Sino-Pakistan relationship. Some Indian officials do concede that the growing density of the Sino-Indian relationship could have some impact over the long term on the Chinese strategic calculus in the subcontinent.

Take for example trade. The way Sino-Indian trade is booming, it is likely to reach the target of \$10 billion next year itself. And within another five years, and certainly by the end of the decade, it could double again to \$20 billion. The intensifying trade and commerce should naturally raise the stakes for China in its relationship with India and Beijing will have

In the past India had tried, without much success, to keep China out of the subcontinent. If India can now think out of the box, leveraging Chinese power to restrain Pakistan becomes an interesting option.

to factor this into its larger policy towards the subcontinent.

Indian optimists on China point to the fact that there has already been considerable movement in Beijing's positions on issues of concern to New Delhi. China's publicly articulated position on the Kashmir question has certainly evolved since Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Beijing in December 1988. They also refer to China's refusal to back Pakistani adventurism in Kargil in 1999. Pessimists in India, however, suggest that a lot more evolution in China's Kashmir policy might be needed to make it more balanced. They also underline China's role in making Pakistan a nuclear weapon power in the 1980s and the continuing cooperation on the missile programme. The prudent answer in New Delhi to the question whether India can ever wean China away from Pakistan is likely to remain a negative one for quite some time to come.

But the question itself is posed from the perspective of a zero sum game — that any gains for India in its ties with China must be a loss for Pakistan and vice versa. India must consider alternative ways of thinking about the triangular relationship as well as a potential Chinese role in the subcontinent.

The first assumption of such a creative policy must be that progress in solving India's bilateral problems with China could radically alter the geopolitical context of the region and influence all other bilateral ties in our neighbourhood. There appears to be a recognition of this at the highest levels in the Government as seen from the remarks of the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, at the Combined Commanders Conference in the capital last Saturday. According to an official press statement that summed up Mr. Vajpayee's remarks, "a final resolution of the boundary question would release considerable military energies and finances for other more purposeful activities. It is therefore a strategic objective and to achieve it, we should be willing to take some pragmatic decisions."

The full import of Mr. Vajpayee's remarks on China has not been wide-

ly understood. It is probably the first time since the Sino-Indian war in 1962 that an Indian Prime Minister is saying that the nation should be ready for major departures from historically stated positions on the boundary dispute. That he chose a meeting of senior military officers to make this bold assertion is equally significant. In preparing the country for "territorial concessions" in the boundary negotiations with China, Mr. Vajpayee is declaring that a final settlement of the dispute is a national strategic objective. The reference to the "release of considerable military energies and finances" is not too difficult to decipher. Mr. Vajpayee is saying the prospect of ending India's historic "two-front" problem might be at hand, if the nation is ready to shed its past rigidity on the boundary dispute with China.

Second, rapid progress in solving bilateral problems with China also undercuts the premises of Pakistan's negotiating position with India. Islamabad says, "let's solve the core political dispute (read Kashmir) and normalisation of relations will follow." New Delhi believes cooperation across a broad front creates the conditions for negotiating that difficult deal on Kashmir. Islamabad's arguments that trade and commerce must wait until political disputes are resolved run counter to the arguments of not just India but China as well.

The new regional doctrine unveiled recently by the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, at the Boao economic summit emphasises the importance of rapid economic integration in Asia and the creation of a new security order on that basis. India is more in tune with this new thinking in China than Pakistan. New Delhi can contribute vigorously in moving ahead with the new economic agenda Beijing has in mind.

Third, India has legitimate grievances about the past nuclear and missile cooperation between China and Pakistan, which has made the security condition in the region so difficult for India. Instead of crying over spilt milk, the Indian emphasis must now be on getting China to stop all

such transfers in the future. The fact that China has finally taken the responsibility to lead the efforts to defuse the nuclear crisis in North Korea points to the potential role it could play in restraining the behaviour of Pakistan. If political chaos deepens in Pakistan and the structures of current control over nuclear weapons there become shaky, China will have an important part to play.

Fourth, for decades India has seen Pakistan and China as two adversaries who are in an unshakeable alliance. But as the regional context changes and Sino-Indian ties move in a positive direction, the triangular relationship is unlikely to remain the same.

The new awareness of the threat from terrorism after September 11, 2001 has altered the security debate in the region. The concerns about Pakistan becoming an epicentre of religious extremism and international terrorism are not limited to India. During his visit to Beijing, Gen. Musharraf was under some compulsion to give public assurances that Pakistan will not allow its soil to be used by Muslim separatists from the restive province of Xinjiang. There have been reports of strong complaints from the local authorities in Xinjiang about links between extremists there and terrorist outfits in Pakistan.

The political imperatives in New Delhi and Beijing behind their respective wars on terrorism do not always coincide. But India and China have a common stake in ensuring that Pakistan follows the course of political moderation and economic modernisation. In the past India had tried, without much success, to keep China out of the subcontinent. If India can now think out of the box, leveraging Chinese power to restrain Pakistan becomes an interesting option. To be sure, this is an idea that runs counter to the long held political beliefs in the Indian strategic establishment. India, however, loses nothing by giving it a shot. This year India has started a formal dialogue with the United States on regional security in the subcontinent. This sensible approach of exchanging views on our neighbourhood and finding ways to stabilise it must now be extended to China. India has broken the old rule against engaging great powers on South Asian security. Breaking a taboo is always easier the second time.

(The writer is Professor of South Asian Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.)

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ASEAN CARTELS

J-F. P. M. W.

Need To Demand Higher Prices From Rich Countries

By BHARAT JHUNJHUNWALA

Atal Behari Vajpayee has taken a bold initiative by proposing that a free trade zone be established with the Asean countries by 2010. This will provide Asia with a "learning period" in which to prepare for a multilateral trading system such as that being negotiated under the WTO. Like many mainstream economists, Vajpayee thinks that free trade will beget prosperity to the Asian people. Indeed, free trade would be beneficial. But the real stuff will come by forming cartels, not from free trade.

Monopoly

The theory of free trade holds that each country should manufacture that which it can do best. If India can produce Darjeeling tea and Thailand can produce cameras, then India should export tea and import cameras. Thailand and India will both get tea and camera at cheaper price than if they had manufactured these things themselves. Indeed such a benefit will take place. The level of this benefit, however, will be proportional to the differences between the two countries.

India and Sri Lanka both grow good quality tea. Free trade between the two will not be worth much. But free trade between India and Iraq may be highly beneficial. India would get cheap oil and Iraq would get cheap Indian movies. The differences in resource endowments would determine how much gains would accrue from free trade. The resource endowments of the Asian countries, barring Japan perhaps, are rather similar. Hence the gains from free trade with Asean will also be small.

The gains from free trade even between dissimilar countries will be small in comparison to gains from monopolies or cartels. Consider this: the developing countries that have 80 per cent of the world's resources have only 20 per cent of the world income. According to the theory of free trade, developing countries which have most of the world's resources such as labour, land, water and minerals should be able to get a greater share of world incomes. Developing countries should have had about 80 per cent of the world's income.

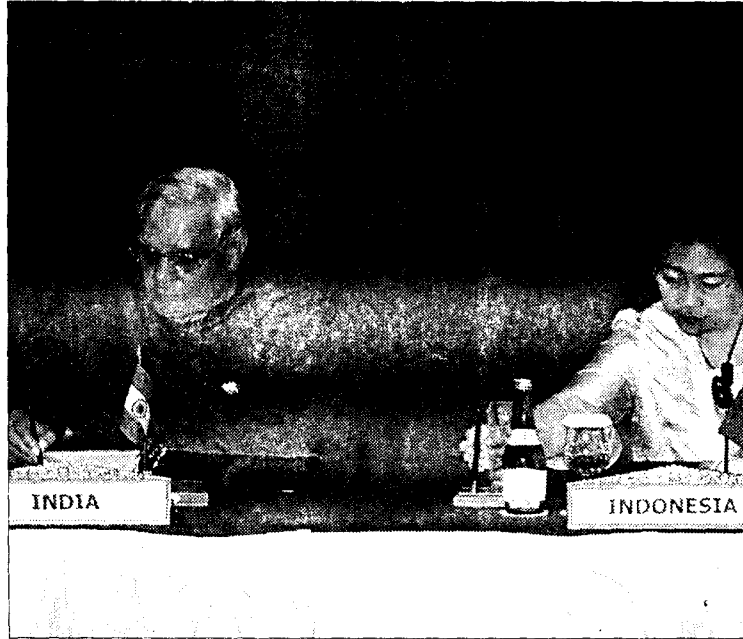
Why is it that free trade, to the extent that it prevails, is leading to exactly the opposite? It is becoming worse, in fact. According to World Development

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Reports, rich countries had 75.4 per cent of world income in 1970 which has increased to 80.2 per cent in 2001.

The fact is that it is not free trade and efficiency of production but monopoly that is determining the flow of world wealth. World trade may be thought of in terms of a "monopoly sector" which would include the likes of Microsoft's software, Coca Cola's soft drinks, Monsanto's genetically modified crops, Boe-

ing and Airbus' airplanes and the like. There is no free trade here. These companies are free to charge exorbitant prices for their products. It is reported, for example, that the cost of producing the Windows software is \$10. Microsoft sells it at \$90. These companies are now protected by the Patents Act and are drawing the world's wealth into the rich countries.



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Asymmetry

The other sector is the "competitive sector". This would include the CAIRNS countries producing wheat and sugar, coffee producers like India, Brazil and Vietnam, car producers like Mexico and Thailand and so on. Free trade operates only in this sector.

These countries are fighting out a grand battle for supplying ever cheaper products to the rich countries. Indeed, the most efficient among these would win the day. India may beat Brazil in coffee and Brazil may do the same to India in sugar. But the gains from such competition would be nominal because the winner would be supplying his produce at the lowest prices to the rest of the world, including the rich countries.

"monopoly" products and have to pay low prices for the "free trade" products of the poor countries.

The creation of a free trade one between Asean and India will do little to remove this fundamental asymmetry of the world economy. There are limited synergies between India and Asean in the first place. Both are seeking foreign investment from the rich countries, hence they can provide little investment to each other. The manufacturing base of the two groups is also similar. There may be some synergy in minerals etc. but the share of those commodities in their trade basket is small.

The Asean countries can import services like software and entertainment from India. But that hardly provides the foundation of altering the global asymmetry between rich and the poor countries. On the contrary, free trade between us would lead to further lowering of the prices of our products like cameras and cars and worsen the asymmetry by providing cheaper goods to the rich countries.

This does not mean that the scope of cooperation between India and Asean is limited. It only means that the direction of

cooperation will have to be different. Instead of focusing on internal trade among ourselves, we would have to cooperate in making "resource-based" monopolies of our products in reply to the "technology-based" monopolies of the rich countries. If Boeing and Airbus can cooperate with each other to sell their airplanes at high prices to the rest of the world, India and Thailand should do the same by jacking up the world price of rice.

Objective

Economic theory recognises that there is a place for cartels. Trade unions of workers are cartels. Free trade in the labour market would lead to lower price of labour and also reward the most efficient workers. Yet, trade unions are accepted and protected because low wages of workers are considered undesirable irrespective of how much efficiency of production they may create. The objective of the economic system is to secure the welfare of the largest numbers. Trade unions help raise the incomes of the poor people hence they are promoted though clearly against the principles of free trade and competition. The same logic applies to the developing countries.

The objective of the world economy is to provide higher incomes to the largest numbers. This will be secured by forming "trade unions" or cartels of the resource-rich developing countries. India and Asean should join hand not to compete with each other in a free trade zone but to make cartels and demand higher prices of their produce from the rich countries. We have the successful example of OPEC.

These countries were able to increase the price of their oil in the seventies. The period, thereafter, saw low rates of growth in the rich countries. It is unfortunate that OPEC leaders have invested most of their wealth in the rich countries hence are not willing to increase the price of their oil and more. The value of their investments in the rich countries will collapse if those economies were to face a crisis.

Hopefully, Mr Vajpayee does not have such a consideration. He should aim at bringing down the might of the rich countries by making cartels of jute with Bangladesh, tea with Sri Lanka, rice with Thailand, coffee with Vietnam and Brazil and so on. Only then will poor countries having 80 per cent of the world's resources get 80 per cent of the world income.

India keeping a close watch on West Asia situation: Sinha

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, OCT. 12. The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, today called for "restraint, especially by Israel", following the recent Israeli attack on Syrian territory. Briefing presspersons on the Prime Minister's special aircraft en route from Chiang Mai to New Delhi, Mr. Sinha said India was keeping a close watch on the situation in West Asia.

"We are in touch with both the Governments (of Syria and Israel) through our embassies. We have already expressed our very serious concern on these developments," he said, hoping that the situation would not be allowed to escalate further.

Without naming the United States, Mr. Sinha was critical of countries with "double standards", "while they had no hesitation in dealing with one military dictatorship (Pakistan) they had serious problems with the other (Myanmar)".

These double standards, he said, extended to the battle against terrorism when it came to Pakistan. Mr. Sinha, however, said as the world's largest democracy, India wanted the democratic form of government to prevail everywhere.

He said India's advice to Myanmar was "very clear" that the process of national reconciliation and democracy must go on and that the National League for Democracy (NLD) leader,

Aung San Sub Kyi, had a major role to play in this.

On the current situation in Afghanistan, Mr. Sinha maintained that Pakistani cooperation in the fight against terrorism was "under duress". And, he said, when you are "under duress, you do the minimum that is required".

"We have repeatedly expressed concern at the situation in Afghanistan and the regrouping of the Taliban," he said, adding that those who had taken on the responsibility for Afghan security must

"recognise this and do the needful".

He said India had adopted a conscious policy of building trade relations with the ASEAN and other developing regions like Africa and Latin America. "We are trying to expand in all directions."

Conceding that China and Japan were far ahead of India as far as trade with the ASEAN was concerned, Mr. Sinha said: "We will try to catch up."

Asked if the forthcoming State Assembly and Lok Sabha elections next year would affect the process of economic reforms in the country, he said the process must go on because India lived in a dynamic world.

"Others are moving ahead. We should do the same. The case for economic reforms remains very strong," he said.

Mr. Sinha claimed that the concerns of Indian industry had been factored in while

negotiating the framework agreements for free trade area (FTA) pacts with the ASEAN and Thailand.

Pointing out that the Union Cabinet had approved both these agreements, he said that some concern from industry was understandable.

"But I'd like to say we should go back two-and-a-half years when so much concern was being expressed about India being swamped by China."

Reminding presspersons that he bore the brunt of these concerns in Parliament and outside (as Finance Minister), Mr. Sinha stressed that nothing of the kind had happened. "India should face challenges with confidence because we demonstrated that against China there is no reason to be afraid of smaller players," he said.

"Indian industry has gone through the adjustment process and is today ready to face world competition in India and outside India," he said.

In response to a question, he said India was hoping that a framework agreement for a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) would be concluded quickly.

India would soon be talking to Pakistan on SAFTA matters, Mr. Sinha revealed. With Pakistan, India was making progress, he claimed.

"Trading blocks are being formed and are trading more and more with each other. Therefore, we cannot afford to be outside this process."

LOOKING EAST

9/11
5/18

Post-Cancun, Delhi Seeks Asian Cover

By SWAGATO GANGULY

11/10

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The current flurry in Delhi's East Asian diplomacy, capped by security and trade agreements signed by Prime Minister Vajpayee at the India-ASEAN summit at Bali, and followed by a separate free trade agreement with Thailand, can be attributed to a number of recent developments.

First, there is the failure of the WTO summit at Cancun followed by the threat issued by the US, India's largest trading partner, of bypassing WTO for bilateral arrangements. The European Union is more diplomatic but may pursue a similar path; as a composite body it has an even larger share of India's trade. Compounding this failure is the bogging down of the "war against terror", in which Delhi has an interest. The Taliban is resurgent in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden remains at large, and Washington has picked a fight in the Gulf that may eventually lead to the creation of an Islamic Republic of Iraq. If Delhi had looked West after 9/11, it is now forced to consider whether it is worthwhile having some more arrows to its bow.

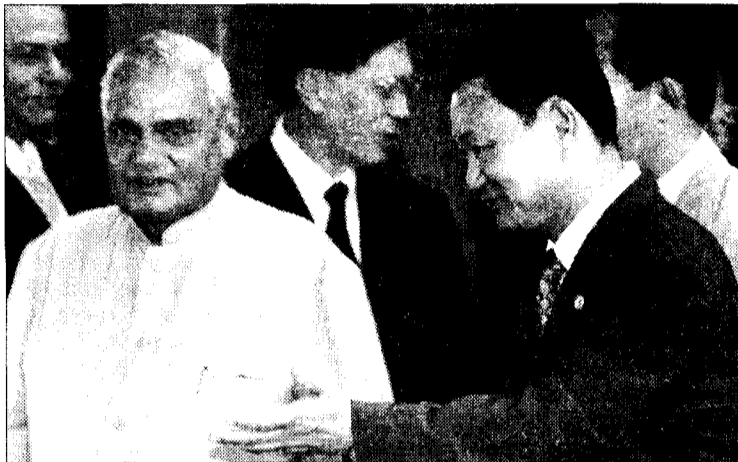
Visionary plans

Second, there is the failure at the sub-continental level itself. Vajpayee's numerous peace initiatives have run aground, and SAARC remains a non-starter, thanks mainly to Islamabad's insistence on putting Kashmir before everything else. But even in a perfect world, were the Pakistani military to drop its unremitting hostility to India and/or become subject to civilian authority, it is doubtful whether partnership with economic pygmies like Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and the Maldives would help India ride out a post-WTO world order where rampaging giants like NAFTA and EU run roughshod over everybody else.

The only solution is to belong to a club that pulls its own weight in world economic affairs, and extended ASEAN (including its summit partners China, Japan and South Korea) seems the obvious candidate. Such considerations have caused Delhi's slothful bureaucracy to push for visionary plans like a Delhi-Hanoi railway, which normally would have been stymied by considerations like the possibility of more drugs and arms flowing into the Northeast. If that is what Vajpayee meant

when he said the old defensive and introverted Indian approach is being replaced by a more confident and outward-oriented one, it is to be welcomed.

The new thinking can in fact be traced back to 1991 and economic liberalization, when the "Look East" policy was officially inaugurated by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. In that sense Vajpayee is picking up from



where Rao left off. Prior to 1991 Delhi tended to view East and South-east Asia with disdain, as the region was aligned to the West while Delhi took sides with the Soviet Union. Living standards circa 1955 were about the same in India and, say, South Korea, but what Delhi's policy-making elite didn't notice was that while South Korea's economy grew at more than 10 per cent per annum through the sixties and seventies, India held to what was billed the "Hindu" but should more accurately be described as the Fabian socialist rate of growth, 3 per cent. That was almost nullified by India's rate of population growth, 2 per cent, the best explanation for why, in an era of Asian tigers and Chinese dragons, India looked, for all intents and purposes, like a snail struck by torpor.

Economic diplomacy

Fortunately, quite a few in Narasimha Rao's team had worked for international development institutions, for example, Manmohan Singh who had been General Secretary of the South-South Commission in Geneva. They were knowledgeable about and impressed by the East Asian experience, and able to give Indian diplomacy, which had been previously focused on prestige and security issues, an economic leg. Hence the "look East" policy — India had to seek

a foothold in the world's fastest growing region that happened to be in its neighbourhood. It dawned on Delhi that neither prestige nor security came without an economic price tag. Not only is the defence of a country with no cash reserves weakened, but one where people have no future and very little to aspire for cannot hope to have a stable polity.

Delhi's mistakes present it

with an image problem, which is why Vajpayee had to refer, in the course of his address to Asean Business and Investment Summit at Bali, to "flawed" perceptions that shape decisions. Delhi will have to work hard to alter not just those perceptions, but also the realities on which they are based. There is not only Delhi's past neglect of the region, an outrageous example of which is that the first ever visit paid by an Indian prime minister to South Korea came as late as September 1993. There is also the perception in East and South-east Asia's ordered and consensus-driven societies that governance in India is unstable and anarchic, and lacks the will to take tough economic decisions that will deliver long-term benefit. Delhi can reverse that perception by following through on the free trade deal signed with ASEAN on October 8, which at present is only a framework agreement. While the speed with which Delhi moved can be explained by Beijing's concluding a similar agreement earlier, delivering on the agreement will require Delhi to offer significant tariff and investment concessions to South-east Asia, setting aside domestic lobbies.

If Delhi is willing to do this, there are several factors working in its favour. First, barring something extremely untoward, the government should be comple-

ting its term next year, countering perceptions of chronic instability. Second, with everyone rushing to invest in China it could be a bubble waiting to burst, like the tech bubble, or South-east Asia in 1997. In the wake of such a bust there would be prolonged political instability in China, as it has no system for co-opting dissent. It makes eminent sense for cash surplus ASEAN economies to hedge their bets by investing in India, if Delhi proves willing to cash in on the opportunity. There is also the political angle: smaller ASEAN nations do not want to be dominated by a militarily powerful China, and India's 1998 nuclear tests and subsequent moves towards operationalizing its deterrent make it look like a credible counterweight to Asia's giant.

Strategic benefits

Entering into a web of intensifying trade, investment, and travel with South-east Asian countries can deliver immense strategic benefits to Delhi, as it would confront Islamabad with a Hobson's choice. It could follow India's path and integrate itself with the ASEAN economic zone, in which case it would have to open itself to Indian goods and influence. Or it could remain locked out of this lucrative trading zone and dependent on handouts from international agencies. Delhi could also work on a strategy of decreasing Islamabad's relative utility to Beijing, by settling claims on the Indo-Chinese border and fostering interdependence between the two big economies. If Islamabad's only contribution is to continue to breed terror groups, that will sooner or later look counterproductive to Beijing as it attracts US intervention in the region, while a war between India and Pakistan would be harmful from the point of view of its (hopefully) growing economic interest in India. If Delhi succeeds in isolating Islamabad in the region, that should persuade the latter to turn off the tap of *jehadi* terror.

India's colonial experience made Delhi's foreign policy somewhat Eurocentric, even in its inverted mode which entailed seeking friendship with anti-Western nations and setting up the non-aligned movement as a means of dissenting against the Euroamerican West. It is now time to forego complexes and look more towards its own extended neighbourhood for solutions to its problems.

The author is Assistant Editor, The Statesman

India, Thailand ink free trade pact

Devirupa Mitra and IANS

BANGKOK, Oct. 9. — India and Thailand today entered a new era in bilateral cooperation by signing five agreements, including one on establishing a free trade area by 2010.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and his Thai counterpart Mr Thaksin Shinawatra, who received the Indian Prime Minister at Government House in the morning, clapped as their ministers signed the agreements in the Ivory Room of a newly constructed state mansion. Shortly before the signing of the agreements, the two leaders had a one-on-one meeting for 20 minutes.

The FTA pact, which diplomats said signalled deepening of bilateral ties, was signed by Union commerce minister Mr Arun Jaitely and his Thai counterpart Mr Adisai Bhodaramik.

The pact — the first to be signed outside South Asia and with an Asean country — envisages bringing down duties to zero on 83 items from March next year. This would be extended to all services and investment by 2006, and goods by 2010. Officials believe the FTA would double two-way trade to \$2 billion in a year.

The list of the 83 items, however, has not been announced. Besides, the two countries did not reach any agreement on how to define "rules of origin" of goods, which is an important component in improving bilateral trade.

The other pacts covered cooperation in agriculture, tourism and biotechnology as well as visa-free travel for diplomatic and official passport holders.

"Thailand and India are entering into a new partnership," foreign minister Mr Yashwant Sinha, who signed two of the agreements, told a news conference.

Mr Thaksin agreed to allow Indian

Thailand is Rama rajya: PM



Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Thai Prime Minister Mr Thaksin Shinawatra on Thursday. — AFP

BANGKOK, Oct. 9. — History was made today in Thailand's 30-year-old democracy and party to it was none other than our Prime Minister.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee became the first foreign leader to address both chambers of the Thai Parliament. And in a special gesture of respect to this elderly statesman handicapped by a knee problem, the Lower House president had ordered all MPs to give Mr Vajpayee a long clap. Mr Uthai Pimjaichon was not disobeyed. The Prime Minister took time after entering the House to amble towards his seat, the members standing and clapping all along. In his speech, Mr Vajpayee described Thailand as "Rama rajya", an allusion to King Rama IX of the Chakri dynasty. He

suggested that a twin-city relationship between Phuket and Port Blair be developed to help promote cross-regional tourism. Being democracies, Mr Vajpayee felt, India and Thailand are vulnerable to terror, and hence both should join forces to set up a "zone of peace" in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. Earlier, after being received by the presidents of both Houses, Mr Vajpayee signed a message standing under a photograph depicting the setting up of constitutional monarchy in Thailand by King Rama VII. Thailand celebrates the 30th anniversary of the October Revolution next week. On 17 October, 1973, a million men demonstrated in Bangkok to overthrow the military dictatorship. — SNS

Airlines to fly to more destinations in Thailand, in response to yesterday's announcement of Mr Vajpayee allowing Asean airlines to operate an unlimited number of flights to India.

In the evening, Mr Shinawatra host-

ed a reception for Mr Vajpayee at Hotel Shangri-la.

Thai pledge against terror, page 4
PM's interview to *The Nation/ANN*,
page 11

10 OCT 2003

China keeps its word on Sikkim

PRANAY SHARMA

Bali, Oct. 8: With a tweak in cyberspace, China took a visible step towards resolving a decades-old dispute over the legality of Sikkim's accession to India.

Hours before the meeting this morning between Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao at the Bali Intercontinental Hotel, Chinese officials pointed out to the Indians that their foreign ministry website had stopped showing Sikkim as a separate country.

The move paves the way for progress when the special representatives of the two countries, national security adviser Brajesh Mishra and Chinese senior vice-foreign minister Dai Bing-

guo, meet in Delhi later this month to resolve the long-standing boundary dispute between the neighbours.

"We are trying to honour whatever understanding was reached between us in Beijing," Wen told Vajpayee during their 30-minute meeting.

"This morning's meeting can be characterised as excellent," foreign secretary Karwal Sibal told reporters later, adding that the talks were marked by "cordiality and friendliness" in both "tone and content".

The alteration in the Chinese foreign ministry's official website — www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/ — was conveyed to the Indian delegation late last night by officials accompanying Wen. Earlier, Sikkim was mentioned as a separate

country along with a one-line statement: "The Chinese government does not recognise India's illegal annexation of Sikkim."

"Yesterday if you looked at a list of the countries in the region, Sikkim used to figure after Singapore," Sibal said, referring to the website. "It is no longer there."

During Vajpayee's visit to China this June, Beijing had agreed to open a trade-point with India at Nathu-la in Sikkim — a move widely seen as the beginning of the process by China to accept Sikkim as a part of India. The alteration is yet to be reflected in China's official maps. Delhi believes it will be done in the coming days.

Wen told Vajpayee that China sees the resolution of the bound-

ary dispute in the perspective of its "long-term and strategic" relations with India. Confident that the dispute could be settled with "clear political determination from both sides", the Chinese Premier called for efforts to take bilateral relations forward.

"Resolution of the boundary issue will send out an important message to the outside world that the two Asian giants have come together to resolve this dispute," Wen said. He pointed out that along with Southeast Asia, India and China accounted for nearly three billion people and together they could make a significant contribution not only to the world, but also to the "rejuvenation" of Asia.

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Oct 9 2003

ATAL TO FIND TIME TO DISCUSS FESTERING BORDER DISPUTE WITH CHINA

Vajpayee off to win Asean hearts

M.R. Narayan Swamy
BALI 6 OCTOBER

INDIAN Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Monday began a week-long tour aimed at boosting ties with Asean countries during which he also promised to discuss the festering border dispute with China.

Mr Vajpayee received a traditional welcome as he reached this Indonesian resort island to attend the ninth summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) as well as the second summit meeting between India and the 10-member grouping.

Indonesian agriculture minister Bumgaran Saragik received the Indian leader at the Ngurah Rai Airport at the edge of this picturesque town. Soldiers with their guns drawn ringed the Air-India plane soon after it landed. Indian officials said he would also hold bilateral meetings with leaders of several countries, including China, South Korea, Indonesia and Singapore, before taking part in the



MEETING OF MINDS: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee with South Korean president Roh Moo-Hyun in Bali on Monday. — AFP

Asean-India summit that will focus on deepening economic relations. Among other things, terrorism would figure in the discussions in a big way.

Both while speaking to reporters before boarding Air-India One in New Delhi late Sunday and on board the aircraft, Mr Vajpayee himself underlined the key issues expected to figure in his various dialogues.

"Our relations with the countries of Asean, and with Asean itself, have acquired a new dynamism in recent years," he said in a departure statement. "We are in the

process of strengthening the contemporary relevance of our historical cultural links... we have political convergences and economic complementarities in a globalised world. The upgradation of our dialogue with ASEAN to summit level last year was a recognition by both sides of this."

Mr Vajpayee has a lean day Monday, with just two bilateral meetings scheduled: with South Korean president Roh Moo-Hyun and Vietnamese prime minister Phan Van Khai.

Mr Vajpayee will address the Asean business and investment summit Tuesday, before

launching into meetings with Philippines president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. On Wednesday, he will discuss the border issue when he meets his Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabao at the Bali Intercontinental Hotel, where the visiting leaders are staying.

The Indo-Asean summit and agreements with Asean will follow later in the day, before Mr Vajpayee leaves for Bangkok for meetings with leaders of Thailand with which New Delhi has forged close ties since launching a "Look East" policy over a decade ago.

The Asean summit "provides a timely opportunity to discuss a number of areas of common interest," he said. "We are all concerned about the fate of multilateralism in the modern world. We have to deal with the increasing spread of terrorism into the South East Asian region." Mr Vajpayee described Thailand as "one of our closest allies in the Asean region. We have maintained our traditional cultural affinities. We have also significantly strengthened our trade and economic cooperation in recent years."

Hectic diplomacy ahead for MEA

Saurabh Shukla
New Delhi, October 2

“HECTIC DIPLOMACY” is the catch phrase, which describes the busy Indian diplomatic calendar till the end of the year. With a number of high profile visits lined up the South Block mandarins are on their toes.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee leaves for a six-day tour for Bali for Indo-ASEAN and a bilateral trip to Thailand from October 6-12. Soon after UN Secretary General Kofi Annan comes calling on October 13 and 14. The two leaders are expected to deliberate on a range of issues from Iraq to UN reforms and the situation in the sub-continent. His visit also assumes significance, as Annan will be on his way to Malaysia to address the OIC summit, where Pakistan is pitching to raise the Kashmir issue “aggressively”.

South African President Thabo Mbeki is expected on October 16. The two countries have a growing convergence on economic and political issues and the two leaders met in New York for the first India-Brazil-South Africa trilateral summit meeting recently. This will be followed by a visit of the Sri Lankan Premier Ranil Wicremesinghe on October 19.

“The pressure is definitely on us, as these visits come in the midst of the festive season, but the positive side is that our busy diplomatic engagements prove that the Indian diplomacy is on an overdrive,” said an MEA official.

Another important visitor will be Prince of Wales, Prince Charles who is expected on an of-

ITINERARY

- ▶ PM leaves for a 6-day tour to Bali and Thailand from October 6
- ▶ UN Secretary General arrives on October 13
- ▶ South African President Thabo Mbeki comes calling on October 16
- ▶ Sri Lankan PM Ranil Wicremesinghe arrives on October 19
- ▶ Prince Charles arrives on October 28
- ▶ Italian Premier Sylvio Berlusconi arrives on November 20

icial cum tourism mission from October 28. While the man who is hogging the global headlines, Italian Premier Sylvio Berlusconi will be in New Delhi for the Indo-EU Summit and bilateral discussions on November 27. New Delhi will also rollout the red carpet for Paul Berenger, the new premier of Mauritius on November 20. Also taking a passage to India are the Presidents of Armenia, Switzerland, Senegal besides the Premiers of Hungary, Canada and Mongolia.

The Prime Minister's Air India One will again hit the skies on November 11 for his trip to Russia, Tajikistan and Syria.

Sinha focus on Arab angle

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Sept. 24: India will try to assess the view of key players in the Arab world on the situation in Iraq and the likely impact in the region if Delhi were to send troops to the war-ravaged country.

Foreign minister Yashwant Sinha will hold the first-ever political dialogue with the Gulf Cooperation Council on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on Friday.

The six-member council, which includes Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman will be represented by secretary-general Abdul Rahman bin Hamad al-Attiyah.

The meeting will help Sinha find out the views of the Gulf countries on Iraq and gauge how they will react if India sends troops to join the US-led stabilising effort.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who stopped in Turkey on way to New York, has already

assessed the mood in Ankara.

In November, he is scheduled to visit Syria, another neighbour of Iraq.

Though the Centre continues to hold that it will decide on sending troops to Iraq only after an "explicit UN mandate", the US is keen that India commit its forces. Indications are that a decision will be taken only after the November Assembly elections in five states.

Friday's meeting is "exploratory" and will not be limited to Iraq. But it will help India get inputs on the situation from key players in the neighbourhood.

Another important issue likely to come up at the meeting is the situation in West Asia. Sinha will try to reassure the Arab world that an agreement to jointly fight the "scourge of terrorism" with Israel does not necessarily mean a dilution of Delhi's stand on Palestine or its leader Yasser Arafat. Sinha will stress that India remains committed to the Palestinian cause and continues to regard Arafat as the symbol of the Palestinian struggle.



Yashwant Sinha

THE TELEGRAPH

25 SEP 2003

India and Turkey cement 'old ties', plan IT tie-up

Ankara: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee completed the political leg of his four-day visit to Turkey and left on Thursday for Istanbul, the country's financial powerhouse. Here the focus will be shifting to economic matters. Mr Vajpayee, who is on an extended, almost fortnight-long visit to Turkey and the US, will leave for New York on Friday. He will address the 58th session of the UN General Assembly. Mr Vajpayee is the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Turkey since 1988.

During his two-day stay in here, he had wide-ranging talks with his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and said that the two countries with "ancient links", were now ready to evolve into "modern partners". After extended delegation-level talks, the two countries signed several agreements, including one on setting up a joint working group on terrorism. Terrorism was one of the dominant themes of the discussions, as both India and Turkey are victims of cross-border terrorism.

The US request for troops to Iraq, from Ankara and New Delhi, was also discussed. Mr Vajpayee made it clear that his response would depend on what ac-

tion the UN security council takes, as well as India's "internal security situation". Other agreements and protocols that were signed, included ones on cooperation in the fields of science and technology, IT and computer software. The foreign ministries of the two countries also exchanged notes on the ratification of agreements signed earlier — one on extradition in June 2001 and another on tourism in 1995.

The Prime Minister, who laid a wreath at the memorial to Kemal Ataturk, 'Father of modern Turkey', also called on the speaker of the Turkish parliament. Officials travelling with the Prime Minister, described the talks between the two sides as fruitful and said that India and Turkey had set the stage for a relationship that will no more be seen through the prism of Pakistan. Ankara's proximity to Islamabad and its endorsement of Pakistan's stand on the Kashmir dispute, had been among the impediments to closer ties between India and Turkey. IANS and PTI

PM inaugurates Tagore avenue

Ankara: Symbolising growing ties with India, Turkey on Thursday named an avenue in its capital after one of India's greatest poets and philosophers Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, on the third day of his visit, inaugurated the Rabindranath Tagore avenue and also unveiled the Nobel Laureate's bust at a ceremony here. PTI

tween the two sides as fruitful and said that India and Turkey had set the stage for a relationship that will no more be seen through the prism of Pakistan. Ankara's proximity to Islamabad and its endorsement of Pakistan's stand on the Kashmir dispute, had been among the impediments to closer ties between India and Turkey. IANS and PTI

'No question of a dialogue till Pak stops terrorism'

If you treat Pakistan as a normal polity, then you are making a mistake, says Yashwant Sinha

Saurabh Shukla
New Delhi

It's been a hectic few weeks on the foreign policy front. The won't-go-away-easily question of sending troops to Iraq, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit, Pakistan's woolly-headed peace moves and now the forthcoming United Nations General Assembly meet. So, is India sending troops to Iraq? External affairs minister Yashwant Sinha says in an exclusive interview that the situation hasn't changed much since India said 'no' last time. Excerpts from an interview

You have been holding consultations with your counterparts on the Iraq situation. US has also indicated that it is willing to try to reach for a UN resolution on Iraq. So what is India planning to do?

They are concerned about the deteriorating ground situation in Iraq. We feel that the sooner sovereignty is restored to the Iraqi people and governance is handed back to them the better, else the security situation will not improve. It is not a question of having more troops on ground, it is a question of a fundamentally different approach. Where the Government becomes Iraqi and they start taking care of their own problems, which includes security, their natural resources, their reconstruction. The sooner this happens it will be better for Iraq.

But what about sending the troops?

We'll see what the Iraqi regime wants, they will not need foreign forces.

So, are you saying that we will not get into

any more arguments with the US on the troops issue. Is there a hitch on the issue?

It's not a question of a hitch now, the decision to send troops or not was never smooth. There were host of considerations. What CCS decided on July 14 was that even in order to "consider" we need an explicit UN mandate. The ground of reconsideration has not arisen as there is no resolution.

It's been more than two years since the start of the war on terror. Not only is the war nowhere near finishing, worst, our own concerns have been largely ignored. What is happening?

Till the time there is an absence of clarity on the global war against terrorism it will continue to be weak. Then, there is the issue of double standards: they cannot live with one set of terrorism, but they can live with the other, only because it doesn't affect them. If you say that cross-border terrorism in Afghanistan is bad then cross-border terrorism in India is equally bad. You cannot say that cross-border terrorism in Afghanistan needs to be fought but terrorism in India needs to be condoned.

Terrorist organisations have been banned but they reappear under different names, take the case of LeT. When Pakistan says that we have closed camps that is not enough. What do you do with those people, have you disarmed them, have you arrested them, have you proceeded legally against them? So, closing a camp is not good enough. These are issues the international community will must consider seriously. India's proposal for a comprehensive convention aga-

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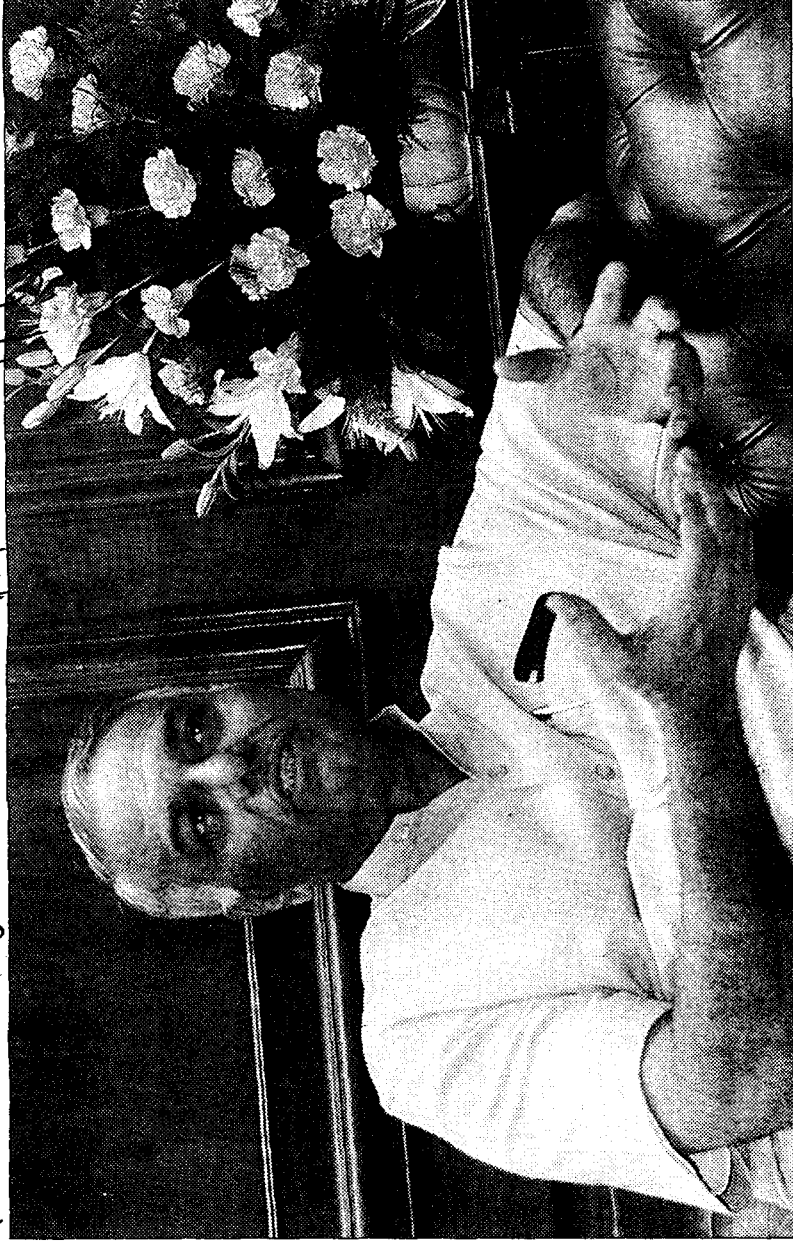


PHOTO: HC TIWARI

YASHWANT SINHA: We must have a clearer approach against terrorism

inst terrorism has been pending since 1996, much before September 11. We must have a clearer approach against terrorism if the war against it has to be successful.

There are concerns about our growing friendship with Israel. That it may cost us our friends in the Arab world and our commitment to Palestine. Did we forcefully articulate India's position on Palestine and Iran, during the talks?

Our commitment to the Palestinian question remains unaltered and we have told them as clearly as possible. I spent 75 minutes with Mr Sharon and we stated our position to the Israelis as clearly as they told us their concerns. We told them about our relationship with Iran. But then in the conduct of bilateral relations, no country can determine what our ties can be with a third country. They may have security concerns but we have explained in detail where Indian-Iranian relation stands and they should not have any concerns on that count.

What about the India-Israel-US axis against terrorism?

Any cooperation between these three democracies will be a part of the fight against global terrorism. It will be a part of our bilateral arrangements with them along with the international agreements on counter-terrorism. It's not a question of an axis. No country in the world can claim they are safe from terrorism, an international understanding is developing despite differences.

What is your assessment on cross-border terrorism, has it changed since PM announced his peace initiatives?

There is no change in the ground-level situation. Pakistan continues to support terrorism, the infiltration continues, the infrastructure is also intact.

But what about the argument (put forward in Pakistan) that increase in terrorist violence will force India to a dialogue?

That has never succeeded in the past and will not work in the future. Our position remains clear and consistent that there is no question of a dialogue till Pakistan stops terrorism. In any case their argument for a dialogue does not hold ground. We can't sort out all the is-

issues between India and Pakistan in one sitting. If dialogue has to be meaningful and sustained, the right atmosphere must be created for it.

But it seems clear that recent people-to-people contacts have shown that people want peace, even hardliners like Fazalur Rehman played the peace pipe when he was in India recently. So, then, is the military regime the main hurdle?

I have no doubt in the mind that the military regime is a stumbling block to peace, very clearly. I have told my interlocutors that they must understand the nature of the Pakistani state and military. If you treat Pakistan as a normal polity then you are making a mistake.

Any possibility of talks anytime soon, say on the sidelines of the coming United Nations General Assembly meet?

Whether it is New York, Timbuktu, Islamabad or New Delhi, there is no bilateral dialogue possible till Pakistan stops cross-border terrorism.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Mehmoed Khurshheed Kasuri has said that he will be

When Pakistan says that we have closed camps that is not enough...have you disarmed them, have you arrested them, have you proceeded legally against them? Pakistan continues to give support to terrorism, the infiltration continues, the infrastructure is also intact.

If we had got enough from Pakistan, we could have solved all issues. We'll have to persevere and be patient and make Pakistan see reason.

personally coming to India to deliver the invitation for the SAARC summit in Islamabad. Do you see it as a PR exercise or a genuine move to build bridges?

We haven't heard officially about it, we will take a view when it comes to it. I would like to say that the Foreign Ministers of countries do not go around delivering invitations to the head of Government, there are other diplomatic channels available. In any case the dates for the SAARC summit have been decided by the SAARC standing committee and we know about it.

But has Pakistan responded to our peace moves? Do you see any intention to reciprocate?

If we had got enough from Pakistan then we could have solved all issues. We'll have to persevere and be patient and make Pakistan see reason.

But for how long?

You have to see in perspective, that for every terrorist incident that takes place, there are nine that are prevented. We have to fight the scourge of terrorism, and we will win.

Political Am-Bush

5-16-03
1/27/03
Then Sonia will outshine PM

President George Bush called Atal Behari Vajpayee to talk about trade and troops. India's tough negotiating position at Cancun, where the WTO ministerial meeting is being held, is hopefully a guarantee that it will not fall for US blandishments. It is to be devoutly wished that New Delhi is showing similar firmness on the troops for Iraq issue. George Fernandes' recent statement gives cause for hope. President Bush may have told the Prime Minister that with the US having sponsored a UN resolution authorising a multilateral force for Iraq, India's objections have been taken care of. No such thing has happened. As has been noted by many around the world, the US-sponsored resolution places multilateral peacekeepers firmly under American-British command. The UN is being asked to be happy about being given a chance to serve American purposes in Iraq. Countries like France and Germany have already made their objections clear. So should India, publicly and loudly. We should restate the position taken by the cabinet committee on security two months back — that Indian troops will do duty in Iraq only under an overall and explicit UN mandate — and say that the current US-sponsored resolution goes nowhere near placing Iraq under UN authority. Therefore, even if France does not veto the resolution and other countries in the Security Council help pass it, India should still not send troops. Instead of getting into a lather, as our foreign policy sages often do, if and when the American resolution passes, the ministry of external affairs should be instructed by the Prime Minister's Office, which takes all the really important decisions, to make India's stand unambiguously clear. That will even help relations with America, since for tricky bilateral issues a clearly stated position is better than prolonged confusion.

The Indian decision should be easy. Just as Bush wants, bluntly put, soldiers from other countries to face Iraqi wrath because elections are coming up, Vajpayee should not be expected to risk his neck when assembly and general elections are squarely on the domestic political agenda. The Prime Minister's well executed dismissal, during the recent no confidence debate, of Sonia Gandhi's charge was based primarily on the refusal to send troops to Iraq. There's no way Vajpayee can claim the moral and nationalist high ground if he changes his decision on the basis of undisguised pressure even if it comes wrapped in a UN resolution. Then, even Sonia Gandhi will appear to be more effectively articulate than the Prime Minister. Surely, that, as well as the certainty that the Congress will be handed an electoral plum, should be enough reasons to stick to the earlier stand.

Govt says it can't spare troops

By Rajat Pandit
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

GM *12/9*
New Delhi: Visiting US assistant secretary of state for South Asia Christina Rocca may be making a strong pitch for India to reconsider its decision about sending troops to Iraq, but she is likely to return home disappointed.

"India simply cannot afford to send troops to Iraq given the situation in our north-west sector. The US also wanted us to send troops to Liberia but we told them we were not in a position to spare soldiers," top-level government sources said on Thursday.

For one, the 1.1 million-strong army is "heavily committed" along the volatile Indo-Pak border. Some of the formations moved to the western front from the Indo-China border during last year's 'Operation Parakram' are still to return to their earlier locations.

of policy
For another, almost one-third of the army is engaged in relentless counter-insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir and the north-east. "Sending a division-plus force (about 17,000) to Iraq, as the US wants, will mean depleting the crucial strike corps and other formations in central India, when they are in the process of recovering from ten-month-long forward deployment," said an officer.

US CALL ON IRAQ

The Cabinet Committee on Security, on July 14, had made it clear that it would "consider" the deployment of Indian troops in Iraq only if there was "an explicit UN mandate" for it.

The US, with its soldiers stuck in an incendiary situation in Iraq, is now trying to push through a resolution in the UN Security Council to authorise a multinational force under American control for the war-ravaged country.

But Russia, France and Germany

want a larger role for the UN in restoring Iraqi sovereignty. Foreign ministers from the five UN Security Council permanent members are meeting with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in Geneva on September 13 to discuss the resolution.

Ms Rocca, in fact, is learnt to have told her Indian interlocutors during the ongoing visit that the US was ready to re-negotiate the text of the draft resolution.

Government sources, however, said that even with a new UN resolution, India will have to think about committing troops only after studying the prevailing "ground situation" on the Indo-Pak border and in Iraq at that time. Other factors like the upcoming assembly elections in four states will, of course, also have to be kept in mind.

India was, however, ready to contribute to the restoration of infrastructure as well as the medical, health, education, communication and other civilian needs of the Iraqi people.

Delhi offers Israel cooperation but delivers gentle reminder on West Asia peace



NO STONE UNTURNED: An Israeli security officer inspects a plastic walkway at Rajghat before Ariel Sharon's visit on Tuesday. (AFP)

Terror & truce mix for Sharon

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Sept. 9: India today agreed to work closely with Israel and other democracies like the US in the fight against global terrorism.

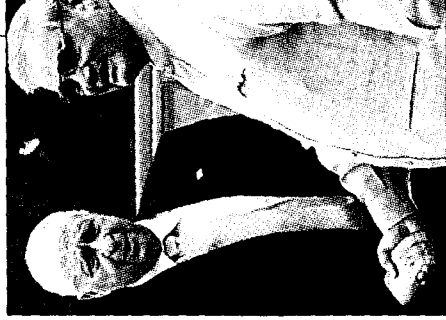
As Delhi greeted a new ally with the offer of cooperation, it also slipped in a thought for an old friend by saying it would neither dilute the traditional support for the Palestine cause nor dump Yasser Arafat.

Careful not to give momentum to sporadic protests on the streets against the visit of Ariel Sharon, the first Israeli Prime Minister to make such a trip, India hoped for cessation of violence and an early return of peace in West Asia — an area which, along with the Gulf, is described as its "extended neighbourhood".

The discussions formed part of the 40-minute "restricted" meeting between Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Sharon tonight. Later, it extended to delegation level talks which continued till a banquet that Vajpayee hosted for his guest from Tel Aviv.

Peace was on Delhi's lips, but terror was on everyone's mind. As Sharon dined with Vajpayee, news came in of a suicide strike that killed six persons at a packed bus stop outside an army base near Tel Aviv.

The Israeli Prime Minister reacted with characteristic fury.



Sharon with Vajpayee. (AFP)

"There has to be full cessation of terror," Sharon said.

Vajpayee, too, had touched on the theme earlier. An "aspect of our common experience is the menace of terrorism. Bilaterally and on the international plane, we are contributing to the global fight against terrorism", he said. "It is a menace that particularly targets democratic societies, which have to fashion a global and comprehensive response to tackle it."

However, in a gentle reminder, Vajpayee added that while India was putting up a determined "struggle to defeat terrorism" and bring international pressure on those who support the menace, it was also trying its best to improve ties with "all our neighbours".

During discussions with the Indian leadership earlier, the Israeli Prime Minister had indicated that he does not have much faith in Arafat as a peacemaker. This prompted Delhi to reaffirm its faith in the war-horse from the non-aligned era.

Sharon described India as "one of the most important countries in the world" and expressed the hope that his visit would help achieve "many things together in many areas".

'Strategic triangle'

The Indian side took care to steer clear of any controversial statements but an official travelling in the Israeli Prime Minister's delegation was quoted by agencies as having said that the September 11 terror strikes in the US and the global campaign against terrorism have "created a new opportunity" for stronger ties between Delhi, Tel Aviv and Washington.

"We are talking about a trilateral strategic triangle combining efforts and joining hands to combat terrorism in Asia, where we see a large rise in terror activity, particularly of the radical Islamic brand," he was quoted as saying.

India and Israel signed agreements on cooperation in science and technology, space, education, culture, health, agriculture and combating narco-terrorism.

■ See Pages 3 and 8

India keeps options open on Iraq draft

9-8-03
5-9
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NILOVA ROY CHAUDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 6. — The Centre is examining options after looking at a draft resolution prepared by the USA to provide for the setting up of a multinational force in Iraq with a wider UN cover, but thinks it will be a long haul before any commitment to provide troops is made.

And though the USA has again requested India for a contingent of troops, various government departments are presenting their points of view to allow the government to formulate its response.

On 14 July, the Cabinet Committee on Security had turned down the US request for troops for Iraq, saying that it would consider the matter if there was an "explicit UN mandate" to deploy a multinational force. It will now seek to consider how specific the new mandate will be, sources indicated, before it reconsiders sending troops to Iraq to participate in a stabilisation force.

The draft resolution will be presented to the UN Security Council after it has un-

UN discusses US resolution

UNHQ, Sept. 6. — France and Germany sought significant changes in the US draft resolution seeking establishment of a multinational force under American control in Iraq as the Security Council began discussions on it. After the closed-door informal consultations yesterday, Council diplomats expressed optimism about an agreed draft emerging but predicted heated and contentious negotiations in days to come. However, they were noncommittal on the US desire to have the resolution adopted before 23 September when Mr George W Bush addresses the annual session of the UN General Assembly.

UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan hoped that a consensus would be reached among the members. — PTI

probably next week, and India's response will depend on the kind of mandate it provides for the UN's involvement in Iraq, officials indicated.

India is speaking with interlocutors in Russia, France and Germany to work towards a draft that calls for greater UN involvement in Iraq, both in terms of control of the multinational force and the nature of the administration governing Iraq.

The recent increase in violence in Iraq has placed the government in a quandary even on the issue of reconstruction activity in that country. If a representative government, of the kind that exists in Afghanistan under Mr Hamid Karzai, comes into being in war-ravaged Iraq, and seeks India's assistance in reconstruction, the government would have fewer quandaries, official sources suggested.

The US-sponsored 25-member Iraqi governing council does not enjoy the kind of international legitimacy that Mr Karzai's government had when it started out, allowing India to undertake major reconstruction and rehabilitation work there, officials said.

US draft is UN-tenable for India

71-9 Review
69

By Siddharth Varadarajan
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The new draft UN resolution on Iraq circulated by Washington is unlikely to prove bait enough for India to send its troops to assist the US occupation of that country.

On July 14, the Cabinet Committee on Security had rebuffed the US request for troops but also promised that "were there to be an explicit UN mandate for the purpose, the Government of India could consider the deployment of our troops in Iraq".

However, the draft resolution falls far short of providing an explicit UN mandate. It merely "authorises a multinational force, under unified command" and urges member states to contribute military forces to that effort.

Though the identity of the "unified command" is not clearly spelt out, the last paragraph of the draft "requests that the United States, on behalf of all member states participating in the multinational force... report to the Security Council" on the progress of this force every six months.

A cross-reference to an earlier resolution, 1483, which explicitly acknowledges the control of the US and Britain as occupying powers, makes it clear the multinational force will be a purely US-led affair.

Though Indian officials spent Thursday and Friday studying the draft, the Vajpayee government is not expected to make a formal pronouncement until the dust generated by the text worldwide settles.

On Thursday, Germany and France criticised the draft, and Russia too has ex-

pressed its reservations about Washington's failure to let the UN take control of the political transition process in Iraq. Among Iraq's neighbours, Iran and Saudi Arabia are keen for the UN to play the decisive role.

While not wishing to comment either way, Indian officials do note that sending troops under the draft resolution's language would be a major departure for India.

"We have never got involved in these kinds of non-UN led military missions", said an official.

In recent years, the UN Security Council authorised the Nato-led Kosovo force (KFOR), the Australian-led Interfret for East Timor, and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for Afghanistan, which operates under the authority of the US Central Command (Centcom).

In none of these cases, say officials, did India even think of committing its troops. This despite having compelling strategic interests in at least one of the affected countries, Afghanistan.

Unless the Franco-German pressure pushes Washington to amend some of the resolution's key provisions, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee will be forced to take a stand on the current draft when he meets US President Bush on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in mid-September.

The experience of Indian peacekeepers in Somalia in 1993 — who became targets for attack by warlords in a situation that had been vitiated by the earlier US-led force, UNITAF — is also likely to weigh heavily on the government.

Salam Sharon: Two Sides May Use Meet To Strengthen Cooperation In Defence And Counter-Terrorism

Govt ready to roll out red carpet for Israeli premier

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 5 SEPTEMBER

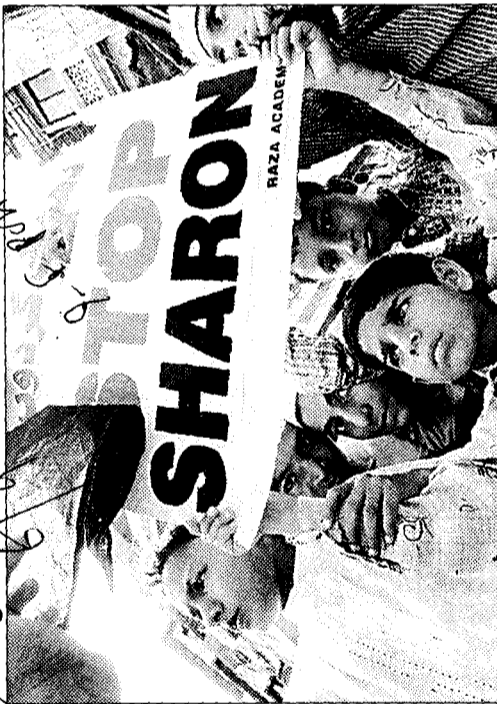
THE government is looking forward to using the forthcoming visit of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to further improve ties with the country. This, even as the Left parties and some other "secularist" outfits are keeping up their protest against the deepening bilateral engagement.

Top sources in the government on Friday said the two sides will use the summit level interaction next week to strengthen the already impressive cooperation in defence and counter-terrorism. Brushing aside the pro-Palestine clamour from the Left as well as Mulayam Singh Yadav's SP and Laloo Prasad Yadav's RJD, they said Mr Sharon's visit will be used by the two sides to explore how India can source state-of-the-art military

equipment from Israel.

On Thursday, leftist outfits, SP and RJD had joined hands with former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda to term Mr Sharon's visit as "unfortunate" and "an insult to the country's support to the Palestine people". Accusing Mr Sharon of being "directly responsible for the massacre of over 3,000 Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila camps in Lebanon" and claiming that efforts are still on to bring him to justice for the alleged crime, they called upon the citizens to protest against the upcoming visit.

"To have such a person as an honoured guest is an insult to India's longstanding tradition of unequivocal support to the struggle of the Palestinian people for national liberation and an independent state. We, therefore, strongly oppose the visit by the Israeli Prime Minister to India," the statement said.



TESTING WATERS: A group of young protesters displays a placard in Mumbai on Friday protesting Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit next week. The gathering condemned the visit and demanded that the BJP government prevent his visit. — AFP

Arabs that New Delhi is not leaning towards Israel.

Officials in the MEA also said India does not share Israel's view of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat as a has-been and a source of terror against the Israeli people. But even as the government tries to balance its reaching out to Israel by assurances of its continued support to the Palestine cause, there is no mistaking the growing fondness for the former in the government circles. It was the Narasimha Rao government which decided to establish diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv in 1993 despite protests from the traditionally staunchly anti-Israel sections of the political class.

The decade has since seen NDA build upon the foundation to expand ties, especially in defence and counter-terror cooperation. This can be called even a paradigm shift given the way previous dispensations fought shy of establishing any links with Israel.

Sources in the government were, however, not impressed by the pro-Palestine clamour, denying that there has lately been any pro-Israeli tilt in New Delhi's approach towards West Asia. To fend off the accusation that the improvement in ties with Israel has come at the expense of long-nurtured solidarity with the Palestine cause, the government, in fact, fielded R.M. Abhayankar, a secretary in the MEA. The MEA secretary told the press that at least Nabeel Sha'ath, foreign minister of the Palestine Authority, did not suspect any erosion in India's commitment to its cause when he was here last week.

That India does not see equations with Palestine and Israel in the terms of a zero-sum game has been conveyed to the Arab leadership also, the secretary said. A structured dialogue has been on since 2002 and two meetings have already been held to reassure the

India wants U.S. to enter into dialogue with Iran

By Amit Baruah

710-11
29/5

BERLIN, MAY 28. India and Germany have agreed that whatever be the issues between the United States and Iran these should be resolved through dialogue, the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, said at a press conference this evening. Giving an account of meetings between the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, and separate meetings between himself and the German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Sinha said both countries hoped that nothing more than dialogue would be needed as far as Iran was concerned. The External Affairs Minister's remarks come as the United States repeatedly referred to Al-Qaeda elements allegedly taking refuge in Iran and Tehran's "support" to terrorism and the need for Iran to adhere to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1373 that enjoins all States to take action against terrorism and terrorists.

In response to questions, the Minister said that India was seeking clarifications from the U.N. on the scope of its new Security Council Resolution on Iraq. "And, until those clarifications are available, we'll hold back our action except in the area of reconstruction." Mr. Sinha made it clear that Germany, which is currently a non-permanent member of the Security Council, had no plans to

join the so-called "stabilisation" force in Iraq.

At the same briefing, the Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal, referred to U.N. involvement in Iraq and the fact that ethnic and religious factors might come in the way of creating a new democracy in Iraq. According to Mr. Sibal, there was a complete meeting of minds on the issue of terrorism. "We are now speaking the same language on terrorism," he said, adding that both Germany and India considered terrorism a threat to their security.

On Iraq, the External Affairs Minister maintained that Germany and India agreed that the new Security Council resolution was a step forward. The U.N., he said, should play an "essential role" in Iraq and the role of the U.N. Secretary-General's representative was very important. Germany, he stated, was in favour of an international consultative process on Iraq — similar to the one launched on Afghanistan. Discussion on Afghanistan focused on the return of Taliban and Al-Qaeda elements. India took the view that it was useful for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to expand its operations beyond Kabul given the current state of law and order in Afghanistan. Turning to the bilateral front, the External Affairs Minister said the German Chancellor had accepted Mr. Vajpayee's invitation to visit India next year — as part of the agreement to have regular annual summits.

29 MAY 2003

India in Iraq

Old Europe's battle with the US may well be over, considering the UN's quick nod to the resolution on post-war Iraq. Consequently, both the military 'occupation' of Iraq and its political and economic reconstruction now stand sanctified by the UN. This is a situation without precedent since World War II. With this the 12-year-old sanctions against Iraq come to an end and Iraq's administration passes into the charge of the US and UK, formally designated the 'Authority'. That this is an absolute victory for the US goes without saying. There is to be a UN co-ordinator nominated by secretary-general Kofi Annan. This co-ordinator also finds a place on the advisory council appointed to offer consultations to the 'Authority'. Yet, control of decision-making vests almost entirely with the 'Authority'. The concessions made by the US in the UN resolution are mostly cosmetic. But France, Russia and Germany have taken the pragmatic decision to justify the new situation in Iraq in terms of accelerating peace and development.

The surprising thing is the reported choice of India for monitoring one out of the five administrative sectors into which Iraq has been divided. Clearly, the anti-war resolution that Parliament passed in the closing stages of the war hasn't worked against India's interests. On the contrary, the US evidently sees a role for India in the management of Iraq. India might benefit from looking at how the NATO members, including Germany and France, are dealing with the award of the other sector to Poland. NATO has agreed to provide all help to Poland, obviously calculating the dividends from taking on that responsibility. India's response should be on similar lines. The spin-off effects from providing troops and accepting responsibility for a key sector in Iraq could well include bagging a few sub-contracts, which would stand India in good stead. The UN's willingness to oversee the war aftermath has more or less resolved the earlier dilemma surrounding the legitimacy of the war. Indeed, there need be no contradiction between our disapproval of the US war on Iraq and our participating in stabilisation efforts in post-war Iraq. At the same time, the Indian leadership would do well not to overplay the significance of the new role. Measured pragmatism should be the Indian approach to an offer that places this country in an advantageous role in the strategic Gulf region.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

26 MAY 2003

Ford slams Iraq policy

2008
J-F Review
HT-16
Madrid, August 27

AT A safe distance from his homeland, veteran Hollywood actor Harrison Ford on Wednesday launched a broadside at US policy on Iraq, his country's gun laws and the film industry for producing "video games" for teenagers.

"I'm very disturbed about the direction American foreign policy is going," said Ford, with US post-war casualties having exceeded those during the actual conflict.

"I think something needs to be done to help alleviate the conditions which have created a disenfranchised and angry faction in West Asia.

"I don't think military intervention is the correct solution. I regret what we as a country have done so far," said the Chicago-born Ford, 62.

The veteran star is in

Madrid to promote his latest release *Hollywood Homicide*, a story of two moonlighting Los Angeles policemen, and receive a commemorative pin from Spanish football outfit Atletico Madrid, rivals of Real, the club having tied up a sponsorship agreement with Columbia films.

Twice-married Ford, who side-stepped questions about his relationship with actress Calista Flockhart, also slammed the film industry for, in his view, relying on hi-tech wizardry at the expense of thrilling plots — though he himself was involved in the early days of the trend with *Star Wars* in the 1970s.

"I think American films right now are suffering from an excess of scale. Lots of movies we're seeing now are more akin to video games than stories about human life and relationships," Ford said while noting "12-to 20-year-olds are, maybe, the

largest economic force in the US movie business."

Asked if his feelings were linked to his veteran status and a longing for the 'good old days', Ford countered: "I'm not a very nostalgic person — but I enjoy a good story."

He admitted that many recent releases, without specifying any in particular, were "not my cup of tea."

"It seems everybody is only going for the big hit, for the most return," said Ford.

However, he used the opportunity to announce he will shortly be back in a big hit of his own in revealing that *Indiana Jones IV* is now scheduled to hit screens in 2005 — despite reports of problems with the script.

"There is a script in preparation for Indiana Jones IV. It's come a long way if we can get to be happy with the progress of the script we'll start shooting in the summer of 2004.

"I'm delighted to get back to that character and work with Steven Spielberg again. I'm delighted to revisit Indiana Jones."

Although on screen Ford has starred in many action-packed, gun-toting thrillers, his *Hollywood Homicide* alongside 25-year-old Josh Hartnett is, in fact, more designed as a comedy — Ford abhors liberal US gun laws.

"I'm very troubled by the proliferation of arms, at the fact so many people in the United States carry guns. It obviously contributes greatly to the crime problems we have. I'm sure gun laws should be strengthened in the United States. I just don't know the correct mechanism."

Ford meanwhile admitted to knowing little about Atletico Madrid — Real's "poor relations" — but added with a smile: "I don't have the sports gene!".

AFP

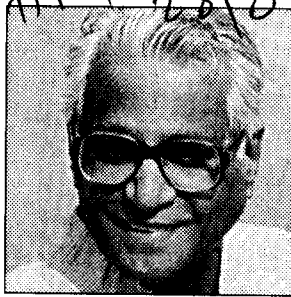
Probe Kargil deal: CPM

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, August 22

CONTINUING ITS attack on the government over the purchase of coffins for Kargil martyrs, the CPI(M) sought to know why it was not probing the deal when Defence Minister George Fernandes had offered to hand over all transactions for probe by the Central Vigilance Commission.

Quoting a December 2001 interview of the Defence Minister reported in a national daily, CPI-M leader in Rajya Sabha Nilotpal Basu said "Fernandes had himself said in this interview that all transactions, including those relating to purchase of coffins, would be probed by the CVC. Why is the government now saying that CVC had nothing to do with the Kargil purchases," he told a news conference. "It's been established beyond doubt that the price paid for the coffins by the government was double the prevailing rates, apart from the fact that these could have been produced in India," he said.

Basu also alleged that two top officials of the Defence Ministry at that time, who were part of the price negotiating committee, were involved in the Tehelka scam. He also accused Fernandes of endorsing a book by a journalist that had sought the dismantling and removal of the Comptroller



George Fernandes
Under fire

Monsoon hungama

THE MONSOON session, which concluded on Friday, had several firsts appended to it.

- It was the first session to see both a no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha and a boycott of the Rajya Sabha by major Opposition parties.

- It was also the first time when the Opposition was not present when eight out of the 12 nominated members of the Upper House were retiring. "This makes it a totally unusual session," maintained Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj.

HTC, New Delhi

and Auditor-General (CAG).

Stating that the Opposition never questioned the prerogative of the Prime Minister to induct a member into his

Cabinet, he said the Opposition would continue to boycott Fernandes as "we cannot accept him as the legitimate Defence Minister and his continuance in office endangers national security".

On the cow slaughter ban Bill, the introduction of which in the Lok Sabha was deferred by the government, the CPI(M) leader said the move had "exposed the differences" between the BJP and its allies. "Barring the BJP and Shiv Sena, none of their partners accepted the introduction of the Bill. Even those parties, who are represented in the Union Cabinet, opposed the Bill inside the House," he said.

Meanwhile, hitting out at the Congress, the BJP on Friday termed the Opposition boycott of George Fernandes in Parliament as "illogical" and "against Parliamentary democracy" aimed at saving its "false prestige" after the defeat of the no-confidence motion. "The Opposition having heard the Defence Minister during the debate now deciding to continue its boycott is only aimed at saving its false prestige at the cost of the health of parliamentary democracy", BJP president M Venkaiah Naidu told a meeting of party MPs.

The BJP president said the no-confidence motion had boomeranged on the Opposition parties as it provided an opportunity to the government to highlight its achievements.

Shekhawat anguished over House boycott

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 22

RAJYA SABHA Chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat on Friday expressed "sorrow and anguish" over the Opposition's boycott of House proceedings this week and said he always acted "in a fair and non-partisan manner." In his concluding remarks before adjourning the House sine die, he said, "As you've seen, I've actively encouraged discussion and debate on issues of public importance irrespective of party positions."

"My effort has always been to facilitate solutions to the problems for the sake of smooth conduct of business in the House," he said.

For the first time, a session of the Rajya Sabha concluded with empty Opposition desks and no comment from Leader of the Opposition Manmohan Singh. There were observations by Deputy Chairperson Najma Heptulla and Leader of the House Jaswant Singh.

The Opposition — comprising mainly the Congress, the Left Front and the Rashtriya Janata Dal, stayed away from the House for the government's "refusal" to hand over a crucial CVC report on Defence deals to Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

The Opposition leaders were unhappy that during the impasse, the Chairman made clarifications that should have come from the government.

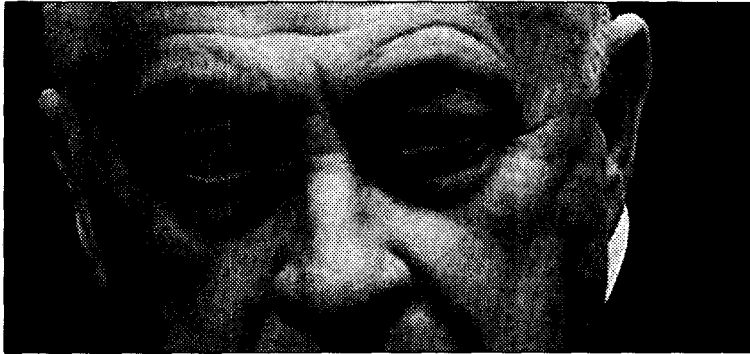
The Chairman said, "Let us not be distracted from the path of pursuing our bigger goal with shared vision, commitment and responsibility, and always upholding and enhancing the dignity of the House."

He recalled the House had a busy session. The Rules Committee had approved recommendations of the Pranab Mukherjee Committee on what matters relating to states should or should not be raised in the House.

Inviting Israel's PM at this fateful moment is a big foreign policy perversion

Blood red carpet

BY PRAFUL BIDWAI



DELHI LOVES THOSE STRONG EYES: Ariel Sharon

*9. Foreign Affairs
HT-6
27/8*

IF PUERILITY were the sole criterion of even-handedness, then India has scored high by inviting Palestinian Foreign Minister Nabil Sha'ath to this country to 'balance' the earlier, infinitely more important, invitation to Israeli PM Ariel Sharon. This combination of clumsy afterthought and pure tokenism should not obscure the enormous policy shift that the government has affected on Palestine-Israel.

India is rolling out the red carpet for Sharon precisely when Israeli repression of the Palestinian struggle against occupation has reached new heights, the PLO and the Palestinian Authority are in grave crisis and the US-brokered road map teeters on the brink of collapse.

Sharon has embarked on a grotesque project of building another, but bigger, Berlin wall — 8 metre-high and 650 km-long, compared to the 3.6 metre-high, 155 km-long original. This 'apartheid wall' (officially, 'Separation Barrier') will isolate Israel from the West Bank, and also cut off the biggest Palestinian inhabitation from historic East Jerusalem, where 200,000 Palestinians live, and which is set to be the new Palestine's capital. A joint Israeli government/settler council even wants to modify the wall's route to isolate as many as 400,000 Palestinians.

The heavy-concrete wall is being built on confiscated territory on the West Bank side. In places, it is as wide as 30-150 metres. It will include electrified fencing, sniper towers, two-metre-deep trenches, roads for patrol vehicles, electronic sensors, thermal imaging, video cameras and unmanned aerial vehicles, besides razor wire. Its function goes way beyond preventing the entry of illegal immigrants or 'terrorists'.

As if the wall weren't apartheid enough, Israel's Parliament has just passed a rabidly racist law which forces Palestinians marrying Israelis to live separate lives or leave Israel. It also bars West Bank and Gaza Palestinians who marry Israeli Arabs from obtaining Israeli residence-permits.

It's hard to think of many countries which will countenance such egregious legislation. But it's equally hard to count the number of countries (including most OECD States) that would officially dignify Sharon at this juncture. Sharon recently visited the US and Britain, but there he was publicly reprimanded for his extreme actions.

The significance of Sharon's presence in India on September 11 is too 'in-your-face' to bear analysis. But such unsubtle, omnibus, unqualified 'solidarity' based on 'fighting terrorism' fails to distinguish between State and non-State terrorism, and between indiscriminate violence against civilians and the right to resist foreign military occupation, including through the use of arms against military targets recognised under international law.

The 'solidarity' idea is equally blind to the qualitative difference between stones and rifles, on the one hand, and tanks, helicopter-guns, wire-guided missiles and F-16s dropping 2,000-pound bombs on refugee camps and apartment buildings, on the other. A mere glance at Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Doctors Without Borders reports documenting heavy ammunition attacks on unarmed demonstrators, medical personnel and children should clinch the issue.

Israel's Shin Bet security agency has admitted to detaining Palestinian prisoners incommunicado for weeks at a secret centre in violation of international law. The blindfolded prisoners are kept in windowless cells. When they ask where they are, they are told: "On the moon."

Sharon's Israel and Vajpayee's India have a lot in common as regards Sept 11. Their officials could scarcely conceal their glee at the highlighting of 'terrorism' by the twin towers tragedy. September is an important month for Sharon in two other ways. In September 2000, he staged his provocative walk at the holy Haram al-Sharif site in East Jerusalem and ignited the second Intifada, followed by calculated, gratuitous, mind-boggling repression. West Asia has never been the same since.

Even worse, in September 1982, Sharon, then defence minister, allowed, or rather conspired with, the fierce Phalangist militia in Lebanon — then under Israeli occupation following an unprovoked war — to enter the Sabra and Chatilla refugee camps near Beirut, and massacred 2,000-3,000 Palestinian civilians over three days. Israeli soldiers, who had lit flares to show the butchers their way, knew exactly what was going on, but ignored even the US ambassador's entreaties: "You must stop the massacres. They are obscene... They are killing children. You are in absolute control of the area and therefore responsible..."

A high-level inquiry headed by Israel's chief justice held that Sharon failed to take basic precautions to protect innocent civilians: "These blunders constitute the non-fulfilment of a duty." There is as strong a case to try Sharon for war crimes and crimes against humanity as to prosecute Chilean dictator Pinochet. Take Sharon's recent role. He delayed the publication of the US-brokered, Israel-friendly, road map and has raised 14 objections to it. He pays lip service to it because George Bush ordered him to. But he is loath to support its deadline for a Palestinian State by 2005 and refugees' right to return. He is doing everything possible to sabotage a two-State solution, while splitting the PA's leadership, undermining the PLO and terrorising and impoverishing the Palestinian population.

Indian leaders will welcome this very man and his extreme-Zionist Likud Party, which has vehemently opposed Palestinian statehood and the Oslo accords although these favoured Israel. Likud defends the occupation in the name of Biblical-

era 'Greater Israel'. It's the biggest obstacle to peace and to rectifying the wrongs done to the Palestinian people when Israel was established on 78 per cent of the territory of former British Mandate Palestine, and again in 1967 when Israel occupied even the remaining 22 per cent land.

'Solidarity' with Sharon totally reverses India's historical support for decolonisation and creation of a Palestinian State. South Block rationalises this in the name of overcoming the "handicap" of a "one-sided relationship" and having "a greater say" and "greater relevance" in West Asia. The larger agenda was highlighted in National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra's address to the 97th annual meeting of the Zionist American Jewish Committee on May 8. Mishra called for a unique India-US-Israel axis to fight the menace of 'global terrorism' primarily by military means (read, fight terror with terror).

It's not hard to see the three inspirations behind this special alliance of 'democracies': a communal perception of the 'common enemy' (Islam in a demonised interpretation); admiration for the super-militarised nature of Israeli society and its willingness to use the most brutal of methods, unlike 'soft State' India's; and a craving for an exclusive 'partnership' with Washington at Pakistan's expense, through which to isolate it.

This profoundly misguided approach militates against an independent foreign policy, commitment to multilateralism and a rational strategy to combat terrorism not just militarily but by redressing the injustices and iniquities at its root. It entails collusion with Empire and perpetration of grave injustice upon the Palestinian people.

New Delhi has no moral or political mandate to inflict such a perversion upon Indian policy. It must be prevailed upon through political action to call off Sharon's visit. This demand has nothing to do with the repulsive agenda of anti-Semitism or rejecting balanced relations with entire West Asia, including Israel — leave alone rationalising the indiscriminate killing of Israeli civilians by groups like Hamas. It only follows the elementary requirements of justice and democracy, and of a consistent single standard in dealing with Israel/Palestine and, above all, with terrorism. Indians should clearly tell Sharon he is not welcome.

Delhi puts UN before Iraq council

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Aug. 20: Ending all speculation, India has said it will not send troops to Iraq even if the governing council there requests it to do so. Delhi will review its stand only if there is an "explicit mandate" from the United Nations Security Council.

After months of debate, India had announced on July 14 that it would not send troops to Iraq solely on the basis of a request from the US.

The Cabinet Committee on Security had said Delhi would change its mind only if the Security Council passes a resolution

explicitly mandating its member nations to send armed forces to stabilise Iraq.

"It is not clear yet whether the Indian soldiers will have to play the role of peacekeepers or peace enforcers in Iraq," a senior foreign ministry official said yesterday.

He added that this would become clear only when the matter was discussed and a fresh resolution passed by the council.

The official said troops could be deployed only under the UN banner or if they were "explicitly authorised", as was done in the case of Kosovo, where a peacekeeping force was sent in after the 1999 war.

After the cabinet committee announced its decision, it was speculated that India might send troops if the newly-formed Iraq governing council made a request.

Some sections felt that if the council, whose formation has been welcomed by the international community, was given Iraq's seat in the General Assembly, it would acquire legitimacy and be regarded as representing all Iraqis.

It was argued that if the council made a request, it would make it easier for Delhi to send in troops.

But the foreign ministry has now made it clear that it wants

an explicit UN mandate.

Yesterday's clarification by a senior South Block official shows that Delhi has taken note of the continuing violence and political instability in Iraq.

It will not rush into taking a decision that could jeopardise the lives of Indian soldiers and prove to be a mistake at a time when five states are heading for elections.

Elsewhere, foreign minister Yashwant Sinha has condemned yesterday's suspected suicide attack which killed the UN Special Representative to Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and at least 19 persons.

"On behalf of the govern-

ment and the people of India, and on my own personal behalf, I wish to convey to you our heartfelt condolences on the demise of de Mello following the dastardly attack on the UN office in Baghdad yesterday," Sinha said in a letter to UN secretary-general Kofi Annan.

He said: "No words can be strong enough in condemning the reprehensible act of terrorism that took away the lives of several dedicated UN personnel, including that of Sergio de Mello, a distinguished professional who had served the cause of the United Nations and international peace, security and development throughout his career."

Let Suu Kyi go!

MEA can summon diplomats thrice a day

We assert that the acknowledged leader of the Myanmar people, Aung San Suu Kyi, is being held incommunicado in the notorious Insein prison in Yangon, by a bunch of men in army uniform afraid of this frail woman, unarmed and incapable of physical resistance but fired with ideals and matching courage, which overwhelms her tormentors. The junta must not think that when they allowed her a few minutes of conversation with Razali Ismail, the UN representative, or when they sent word to the Thai Prime Minister that she was well and not in prison, anyone believed them. They are making the same mistake that tyrants and despots have made throughout recent history, which is to assume, with an arrogance all their own, that they have only to speak for the world to listen. It listens but does not accept; it is in the habit of finding out what they do not want anyone to know. They may remember that the free press around the world has a close professional bond and it works. If the regime assert to the contrary they can produce Suu Kyi in her own home for a photo opportunity before the international media.

The Government of India's silence in the face of grave injustice and abuse of international law needs to be reviewed. It rests on two premises, both flawed. One, that the colonels and generals are sheltering assorted insurgents wanted in India and if pushed it could get worse. The truth is they are already doing their worst. It is an unstateable proposition to say that they are waiting for India to take a stand on Suu Kyi to welcome more insurgent groups. Two, military men have a predictable mindset - to advance when there is no resistance and retreat in the face of opposition. If government policy is valid, the question arises why then are we policing the northern border with China and resisting incursions. Further is it not true that if we abandon vigilance they will be encouraged to encroach further into Arunachal Pradesh, which they do not accept as Indian territory in the first place? Is it also not true that Pandit Nehru encouraged them unwittingly by his famous - *not a blade of grass grows there* excuse? It is not intended to trivialize the problem on our borders, only to suggest that if the policy then was flawed it is a poor argument to persist with it.

It is also a mistake to wait for Asean to take the lead. With any respect that may be due, it is wise to recognize that most Asian nations in the grouping are not distinguished as democratic with a free and unfettered press. Most of them are in it for what they can get and they can get a lot for the time being by befriending the junta. Indian businessmen there are just as guilty. Let it be stated unambiguously that the democratic urge of the Myanmar people is alive and will prevail. The junta will not be around for all time. There will be tomorrow. What then? The least we can do is to take the lead in this part of the world to say to the junta - *in the name of our common humanity, let Suu Kyi go!* And back it up with action. If we say we can do nothing, lock up South Block and throw the key away!

1 1 AUG 2003

A passive foreign policy can be very costly for India's economic fate

Life after the no

WRITING ON THE WALL

ASHOK V. DESAI

9.8.11

The decision of the Union cabinet to refuse the United States of America's request to send troops was too predictable. For a party trying to bring an indigenous stance to foreign policy, the world can be confusing; and when beset by confusion, the simplest decision is a negative one. Admittedly, the option was not a very attractive one. High casualties were assured; no glory was promised. The lure of contracts was tempting, but nothing firm was being offered. The displeasure of Iraq's neighbours, or of Muslims at home and abroad, would not have worried the government too much. Its relations with neither are close, and both would have appeared to be dispensable constituencies.

A government that has invited Ariel Sharon as an honoured guest cannot be very mindful of Muslim — or even human — sentiment. The reason given for rejecting America's request, that an explicit United Nations mandate was necessary, was a respectable one — and only tangentially selfish, although a UN mandate would mean that the UN would bear the costs. Hopes were initially raised in the army that, as in previous assignments abroad, postings in Iraq would mean levels of pay that could enable a soldier to retire in five years. Once the US made it clear that India would have to foot the bill for its own troops, the attraction was considerably diminished.

The loss of contracts is real. The US has made it clear that it will run Iraq in its own way, according to its own rules. Amongst the rules is the unstated axiom that proximity to power in the US will determine access to contracts. An Indian general in the executive council in Baghdad would have meant a foothold in the corridors of power; more important, it would have meant a flow of information out of a structure that is going to be extremely opaque. But India's ability to undertake large public works can be exaggerated.

In the last great boom in the Middle East, India did not take the lion's share of contracts; Koreans had walked away with the largest piece of the cake. Indian public enterprises have earlier obtained contracts because of the government's influence; but they are now moribund, except perhaps for the railway construction companies. The biggest losers are big corporate constructors such as Larsen and Toubro. But not all is lost. Even if the big construction contracts will be impossible to get, they will still need a great deal of steel, cement, copper wire and aluminium windows.

India is the closest large industrial

base to Iraq, and it would still make sense for American contractors to order their materials from here. But to get those orders, Indian manufacturers would do well to keep a tab on the contractors being chosen and woo them. A listening post in Washington may be particularly useful at this point; the industry chambers should set one up.

Perhaps the most serious aspect of the decision is the background. India has always had a powerful anti-American lobby; it covers the entire spectrum from the reddest communists to the most saffron communalists. The

performance has been on par with his predecessor's. But the change in foreign policy is palpable. Jaswant Singh was absorbed in the Indo-US relationship. Yashwant Sinha's approach to the US retains vestiges of the caution, not to say wariness, that characterized the old-world, jaded Indian nationalist. He is more comfortable confabulating with his peers from neighbouring countries; there too, he is wise enough to let the prime minister take the credit for any big move like an overture to Pakistan or a visit to China.

It would be wrong to attribute a



objective basis of anti-Americanism disappeared with the fall of the Soviet Union. P.V. Narasimha Rao moved smartly towards the centre and repaired the relationship with the US; but his government did not try to get close to the US. Paradoxically, it was the successor Hindu nationalist government, with its own parochial bias, that took the initiative after its nuclear ceremony had badly rocked the boat; in three years it achieved the impossible — it made the US government take serious strategic interest in India.

Just when the foundations had been laid and the construction of a relationship could begin, the prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in his wisdom, decided to change his foreign affairs minister. He sent Jaswant Singh to the finance ministry, where his per-

‘ The inclination of the present Indian leadership is to sit on its hands and pray ’

change in foreign policy to a single foreign minister; no doubt Yashwant Sinha gets guidance from more senior leaders in the alliance like Advani and Fernandes. Perhaps the prime minister was himself uncomfortable with the indecent haste with which Jaswant Singh and his US interlocutors were getting close. After all, he takes his Nehruvian heritage seriously — perhaps seriously enough to inherit some of Nehru's anti-Americanism as well.

12/29/7

Whatever the reason, the Indo-US relationship is now drifting. The American political structure is such that the direction of its international policies can change rapidly and radically. Jaswant Singh engineered one such change and exploited it beautifully. Now there is a danger that by its distant nonchalance, the Indian foreign policy establishment will engineer a change in the opposite direction, and we will be back to the days of Narasimha Rao, if not worse.

Which was all right in Narasimha Rao's days, when the US had little interest in the Middle East. But today, it is obsessed with the Middle East. Whatever Maulana Fazlur Rehman's other misconceptions may be, he is right on one thing: there is no evidence that Osama Bin Laden was involved in 9/11 attacks. But the US used him as an excuse to claw Afghanistan out of the hands of Taliban. Although our help, so eagerly offered, was not used by the US, the change of regime in Kabul has been the best thing that could have happened from our point of view — something far bigger than we could ever have achieved with our own strength. Evidence is mounting that the US-UK claims of Saddam Hussein's possession of weapons of mass destruction were a complete invention. But the US has used that canard to wrest Iraq out of Saddam's hands.

The Afghan and Iraqi campaigns are not isolated events; the US is bent on redrawing the map of the oil-basin of the world, stretching from central Asia to Saudi Arabia. That will vitally affect our interests. If we cooperate with America, we might be able to influence the outcome. However, the inclination of the present Indian leadership is to sit on its hands and pray.

That would be a pity, because whatever our international ambitions, the US can make or mar them to a considerable degree. Maybe it is right for India to stay shrunk in its own borders, and to react verbally to all changes in its environment. An outward-oriented foreign policy requires an intellectual effort and an entrepreneurial bent of mind; it is difficult to see the government mustering these. But relations with the US also involve trade, almost a quarter of which is with the US; investment, of which the US is by far the biggest source; technology, in which the US leads the world; and training, Indians are now the largest foreign group of university students in the US. Passivity may be all right in conventional foreign policy, but can be very costly when it comes to the nation's economic fate.

Beyond the Iraq decision

By Harish Khare

India's "no troops" decision suggests that the creeping "American veto" in our internal affairs is not irreversible.

LAST WEEK, the Cabinet Committee on Security finally decided that India would not be sending its troops to Iraq. Before taking the decision, the foreign policy experts and military analysts had exhaustively debated the merits and demerits of the American request that India help "stabilise" occupied Iraq. Presumably, there were good arguments, made by good and honourable men, for and against sending troops to do the Americans' dirty work in Iraq. Since that decision, the members of the so-called strategic community have, by and large, gone into a sullen silence as if they are personally embarrassed over New Delhi's bad manners at the high table. But the manner and context in which the "no troops" decision came about is nothing short of a triumph of the democratic sentiment, given the fact that the Americans had left no one in any kind of doubt that New Delhi would be risking Washington's displeasure.

To begin with, the "no troops" decision suggests that the creeping "American veto" in our internal affairs is not irreversible. Large chunks of our political class — like our business elites — are beginning to think that the road to professional success and personal prosperity passes through Washington, and that somehow the "Americans" have it in their power to dispense initiatives and favours which could help an Indian politician achieve his or her personal leadership ambitions here at home; inversely, an American displeasure could derail this or that leader's quest for positions of influence, even the office of the Prime Minister. Call it creeping 'banana republicanism' or our civilisational weakness to play the running dog to the imperial order of the day, the unstated "American veto" is silently respected by those who want to be our rulers and saviours.

Let it be recalled that before and during the United States' war on Iraq, the two major political parties in this country, the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress, were unwilling to be associated with any kind of public protest. Unlike Europe, which was witnessing an exhilarating exhibition of democratic dissent, India and its leaders were silent. Except for localised mobilisation, in and around Kolkata, by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and others in the Left Front, the so-called mainstream po-

litical parties refused to run the risk of annoying the Americans. The Congress, in particular, was clearly guilty of confusion and timidity; this from a party whose finest moment was when its leader, Indira Gandhi, had defied the Seventh Fleet diplomacy.

Just as the Vajpayee regime has come to believe that the Americans can "help" it manufacture political and electoral success at home — through some kind of "break-through" in containing the 'jehadi' violence or a quasi-membership of the United Nations Security Council — the Opposition parties, especially the Congress, too have come to put great faith in the Americans' capacity to re-jig our internal political equations. Sonia Gandhi's aides appear to believe that the Americans can help (or hinder) garner "respectability" for her "leadership", which would advance her prime ministerial ambitions.

This phenomenon of presumed or real foreign vetoes is not entirely unknown. In the 1960s and the 1970s, the Soviet Union's Indian friends were believed to be exercising undue and unhealthy influence on account of Moscow's geo-strategic clout; but, then, there were always the well-heeled American "agents" to keep the playing field rather levelled. Still, the pro-Soviet or pro-American arguments used to be made and finally approved by a reference to democratic wishes and preferences. All that has changed; with our economy firmly tied to the American "market place", and our middle classes unapologetically clamouring for the American visa, the space for autonomous thinking has shrunk considerably. One has to simply observe how the American ambassadors to New Delhi behave — and are treated — like pro-consuls.

It is no secret that a section of the Vajpayee Government was quite keen on earning the Americans' goodwill by getting on the right side of the Bush administration in the matter of troops deployment in Iraq; in fact, Washington's disappointment with New Delhi on the "no troops" decision is deeper precisely because many high-ranking visitors from India came pretty close to giv-

ing a commitment, in exchange for a White House welcome befitting a heir apparent. In this context, the Prime Minister and others who helped him arrive at the "no troops" decision have shown a refreshing respect for India's national interests and its self-respect. True, this is not the first time that India and the U.S. have disagreed; we have often disregarded the American preferences, like in the matter of how best to deal with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf; but, on all such occasions the Americans had "understood" our position. In the matter of disagreement over Iraq, there is no such understanding, only disappointment, even bitterness. But had our troops been allowed to go to Iraq on a stabilisation mission, the decision would have hastened the integration of our polity in the America-centric global order, as defined and practised by whoever may happen to capture the White House.

The "no troops" decision goes beyond the timidity of this Opposition leader or the half-baked treachery of that Government official. This is the first decision in a long time in which the vested interests could not call the final shot; for once, the final decision-making in the Vajpayee Government was insulated from the belaboured entreaties of the careerists. This too is a departure from the emerging pattern. As it is, the Vajpayee Government has unfortunately developed a knack for allowing lobbyists and 'smoothies' to stampede its decisions; the Conditional Access System (CAS) mess is a prime example of this pattern.

In fact, the Vajpayee Government's leitmotif has been to use "certificates of good conduct" from outsiders for building up an aura of global respectability around the Prime Minister. The BJP's spin-masters stumbled upon this formula during the Kargil War and encashed it electorally in the 1999 elections. Ever since, the regime has used cleverly, at times innovatively, "success" in foreign policy to set and influence the domestic agenda.

Foreign policy is not a private affair between professional diplomats and the strategic community. No

country can pursue a foreign policy that does not find acceptance at home; no government can insist on a course of action that goes against the society's grain or the nation's deepest held beliefs. India may have changed but it has not changed to such an extent that we can assume to have jettisoned the traditions of anti-imperialistic struggles. Indian public opinion would not have accepted a role of a minor appendix of an imperial power. It required an act of statesmanship to understand this fact.

This is not just a matter of democratic propriety; it has to do with the efficacy of statecraft. Societies which are weak or internally distracted cannot be strong and purposive in dealing with the outside world. The crux of the matter was aptly summed up by Jawaharlal Nehru during a Lok Sabha debate in 1957: "Any part we want to play in world affairs depends entirely on the internal strength, unity and conditions in our country. Our views might create some impression on others for the moment but they will attach importance to our voice only in proportion to the strength they know we have. Therefore, both from the point of view of our primary needs and from the point of view of any desire we might have to play a part in world affairs, we have to pay the first attention to our own country's affairs." It is fashionable these days to mock Nehru, but there can be no truer reminder of the inherent connection between domestic strength and prosperity and the global role we may want to assign ourselves.

A country that ranks 127th on the United Nations Human Development Index cannot pretend to be a nuclear power, even though it may have nuclear weapons. It is possible to suggest that even if Indian public opinion had been mobilised dramatically on a big scale in the early stages of America's Iraq war, it would still not have changed Washington's course. But the continued opposition to the American designs finally had a bearing on the thinking of our leaders. It helped that at times even the Sangh Parivar voiced its reservations about sending troops to Iraq. This was a wonderful reaffirmation of the power of democratic mobilisation and protest. This is no mean achievement in this age of too much democratic noise and too little governmental accountability.

Evading AmBush

9. From 5/18 The obviously right decision on Iraq, 6/7

In a way, the time taken by the government to decide against sending troops to Iraq has worked to its advantage. The interval coincided with an avalanche of bad news for the Bush administration from Iraq. US troops constantly targeted and killed, apparently crushed Baathists resurrecting themselves and revelations thick and fast about the extent to which Washington and London were economical with the truth, probably with malice aforethought, about Saddam Hussein's arsenal — it all made the Indian government's decision easier. That is, Americans can be told that surely when George Bush's approval ratings are headed south for the first time since 9/11, they can't expect Atal Behari Vajpayee to risk his popularity in the same context. Not every Prime Minister, after all, has Tony Blair's capacity to hold Bush in awe. Of course, there are good and weighty reasons independent of such realpolitik why Indian troops should not go. De facto blessings for an illegal war and a quasi-colonial enterprise that an Indian contingent would have provided is principal among those reasons. India's relations with Islamic countries in the Middle East was another consideration. Genuine and widespread opposition in this country to any involvement in Bush's misadventure was yet another. It therefore was not a matter of great political sagacity for the cabinet committee on security to decide against gifting an Indian component for the US imperial enterprise. A "yes" would have been shocking and revolting.

Some fear that there will be consequences born of US anger at India's decision. This White House is perfectly capable of fits of pique — witness Bush's behaviour towards old European allies who happened to differ with him on Iraq — but perversely, because India is not so vital to the US scheme of things, the anger may be less. In any case, US policy on Kashmir is already grounded in double standards, Pervez Musharraf is a steadfast ally and cross border terror continues — not a lot can get worse. On the other hand, had India sent troops, Pakistan would have sent them, too, neutralising any "advantage". Second, the US sees Pakistan in a strategic picture involving Central Asia. Therefore, it is unrealistic to expect Bush to lean on Pakistan over sponsoring terrorism in Kashmir. Third, had Indian troops walked into the same kinds of difficulties US troops are now encountering — which is bound to happen — American gratitude would have swiftly turned to buck passing, especially as US presidential elections got closer. There are not even twenty pieces of silver on offer, so it is good the government did not betray some fundamental principles of national and international conduct.

THE STATESMAN

16 JUL 2003

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

*Were there to be an explicit UN mandate for the purpose
the government of India could consider the
deployment of our troops in Iraq.*

Yashwant Sinha

Baghdad Blues

**India's no to US request for troops is
a happy case of going by the book**

In the event, New Delhi has acted wisely in declining the American SOS for sending troops to Iraq. In these columns earlier, we had made a conditional case for why India should not reject the request out of hand. Rather than a knee-jerk ideological response, what was required, we'd argued, was a pragmatic response which factored in India's strategic interests in the region as also its long-term relationship with the world's sole superpower. As the events have unfolded, however, the case for committing troops has become ever more untenable. At the heart of the troops decision lay two imponderables. On the political side, the issue was whether Washington had a clearly defined roadmap to transfer power to the Iraqis and, over the medium term, help establish a democratic regime. This issue was important for two reasons. First, in lending to India's role a measure of political legitimacy in the eyes of the Iraqi people, given the absence of an explicit UN mandate. Second, in formulating a time-bound exit strategy.

On the military side, the question was whether the Indian troops would be allowed operational autonomy. Then there was the minor matter of who would foot the bill for the Indian stabilisation force. On balance, none of these issues has been even remotely resolved. Take the 25-member Iraqi governing council which held its first meeting in Baghdad on Sunday. Even though the council, on the face of it, has both majority Shia participation and the American promise of autonomy, it would be naive to see it as anything like a real "transfer of power". Witness the council's decision to declare the day of Saddam's ouster as a "national" holiday in its inaugural meeting. While there is no doubt that many Iraqis welcomed the fall of Saddam when it happened, celebrating the "event" is hardly high on their list of priorities. Indeed, if the evidence of daily and growing attacks on the occupation force is anything to go by, sending the American troops home seems a far more pressing concern. Clearly, the council cares less about addressing itself to the Iraqi people — even on a symbolic issue — than to its backers on Capitol Hill. As for Washington's long-term political vision, it never had one. For New Delhi to become a party to this political mess would have required not statesmanship but an impossible faith in the American commitment to do right by Iraq.

No troops for Iraq without explicit U.N. mandate: India

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, JULY 14. India today formally decided not to send its troops to Iraq under the American and British command. As expected, the Cabinet Committee on Security considered the issue and politely declined the request of the United States.

After a 90-minute CCS meeting at the Prime Minister's residence, the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, said: "The Government of India has given careful thought to the question of sending Indian troops to Iraq... were there to be an explicit U.N. (United Nations) mandate for the purpose, the Government of India could consider the deployment of our troops in Iraq."

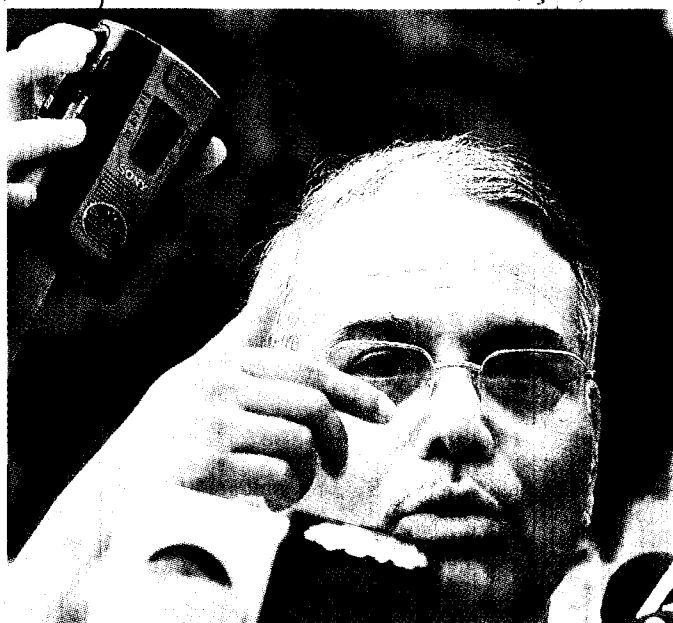
In essence, the decision makes it clear that if there is an explicit U.N. mandate in the form of a clear Security Council resolution, then New Delhi could consider the deployment of Indian troops in Iraq; not otherwise.

The CCS meeting was presided over by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and attended by the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, the Union Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, K.C. Pant, the National Security Adviser, Brajesh Mishra, as well as Mr. Sinha.

Blackwill informed

Official sources said that just before Mr. Sinha read out a prepared statement on the troops issue, Mr. Mishra telephoned the U.S. Ambassador, Robert Blackwill, and conveyed the Government's decision not to deploy troops.

Mr. Sinha said: "Our longer-term national interest, our concern for the people of Iraq, our long-standing ties with the Gulf



The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, addressing the media outside the residence of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

region as a whole, as well as our growing dialogue and strengthened ties with the U.S. have been key elements in this consideration (of the American request)."

"India remains ready to respond to the urgent needs of the

**Editorial on Page 10
Parties welcome
decision; Pakistan
in a fix: Page 11**

Iraqi people for stability, security, political progress and economic reconstruction. Were there to be an explicit U.N. mandate for the purpose, the Government of India could consider the deployment of troops in Iraq.

"In the meanwhile, Government of India is ready to contribute to the restoration of infrastructure, medical, health, educational, communications and other civilian needs of the

Iraqi people. As a concrete gesture of our support to the Iraqi people, we are already planning to set up, jointly with Jordan, a hospital in Najaf in Iraq," the statement added.

Official sources explained the phrase "in the meanwhile" as indicating that India would do everything possible to help the people of Iraq between now and the possible enactment of a U.N. Security Council resolution on the deployment of troops.

The Government was "correct" in formally conveying the decision not to deploy troops under the present conditions to the U.S. Ambassador before the "news" became public knowledge.

The CCS decision comes exactly a week before the monsoon session of Parliament gets under way. With this, the Vajpayee Government will be in a position to fend off any criticism from the Opposition on

the Iraq troops' issue. The principal Opposition party, Congress, had made it clear that it would raise this issue in Parliament.

Some constituent members of the ruling National Democratic Alliance were also against the deployment of Indian troops.

The first public indication that the Government might say "no" to the American request came from the Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal, when he said in Washington that there were "grey" areas and "unresolved ambiguities" in the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1483.

The sources made it clear that domestic political considerations were the key factor that determined the Government's decision. The U.S., too, had requested the Government of India to decide one way or the other its request to deploy the troops.

Ties will continue: U.S.

In a related development, a U.S. Embassy spokesman stated: "As we have said before, this was a decision for the Government of India to make... while we had hoped India would take a different decision the transformation of U.S.-India relations will continue as before. India remains an important strategic partner for the U.S."

Separately, the Foreign Office spokesman welcomed the formation of a new "governing council" in Iraq.

He maintained that this was a positive development that marked the first stage in the involvement of the Iraqi people in their affairs as envisaged by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483.

The spokesman said New Delhi had "noted" that this "governing council" did not just have advisory functions, but had executive authority as well.

Vajpayee's views clinched the issue

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JULY 14. The Cabinet Committee on Security took a mere 10 minutes to reach the "no troops for Iraq" decision. It took 45 minutes more to draft the 18-line "press release". Neither the press release nor the Minister for External Affairs, Yashwant Sinha, was forthcoming on the calculus of decision-making.

The no-troops decision commended itself politically. Both the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi were against the idea; perhaps the only time in recent years the two have held the same view. Ms. Gandhi had, in fact, written to the Prime Minister on June 4 last on the subject. In that communication, she had warned that "the Congress party would be totally opposed to the deployment of Indian troops under any arrangement other than a U.N. command or as part of a multinational peace

keeping force that has the explicit mandate of the U.N."

Today's outcome was a foregone conclusion because the Prime Minister had made up his mind against sending the troops.

In the beginning, Mr. Vajpayee was known to have an open mind and allowed an internal debate within the Government, but in recent weeks he had reportedly come to the "no troops" conclusion. Quiet prime ministerial assertiveness had its impact on the collective thinking.

The Vajpayee Government could not overlook the possible adverse domestic political fallout.

As a senior adviser pointed out: "The bottom line is, no matter how you read Resolution 1483, our troops will have to serve under someone else — General John Abizaid (the new commander of the U.S. Central Command)."

This was unpalatable to the "deshbhakti constituency" at home. The

NDA Government has assiduously tried to manufacture an aura of patriotic and unselfish service around the Indian defence forces, and it was not prepared to subject them to a situation where the troops would get killed doing some other power's dirty work.

Given the known opposition of the Congress, the Left, the Samajwadi Party and mindful of the reservations within the Sangh Parivar, the Prime Minister and his ministerial colleagues were not convinced of strategic advantages (limited, to begin with) over political disadvantages in sending Indian troops to Iraq.

The "strategic advantages" argument looked less and less attractive after the Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal's recent visit to Washington.

At the Pentagon, the Deputy Secretary of Defence, Paul Wolfowitz, is reported to have told Mr. Sibal that the Indian forces might be required for as long as 30

months.

This possible prolonged stay — with every possibility of the Indian troops taking hits — changed the balance of considerations against obliging the United States.

Then, there were definite strategic disadvantages of adverse reaction from Iran and Turkey to the presence of Indian troops.

Even the inclusion of Abdel-Aziz-al-Hakim of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) in the new American-sponsored Iraq Governing Council was not deemed to be good enough reason to ignore Iran's misgivings. India had a definite idea of these misgivings from its interactions with Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, the SCIRI's supreme leader.

When all is said and done, once it became known that the Prime Minister had made up his mind against sending troops, the mood within the CCS changed. Mr. Sinha was the last to shed his ambivalence.

Troops to Iraq: CCS prevails over Advani

By Siddharth Varadarajan
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In rejecting the US demand for the deployment of Indian troops to Iraq, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has also overruled the publicly expressed view of one of its most important members, deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani.



L.K. Advani

Throughout the two month-long debate over the deployment question, most ministers, including Prime Minister Vajpayee, sought refuge in elliptical comments and refused to commit themselves either way. Not so Mr Advani. During his official visit to the US last month, the Mr Advani broke ranks and came out strongly in favour of sending Indian troops to assist the US occupation of Iraq.

Calling all those opposed to the deployment "uninformed", Mr Advani told the 'Aaj Tak' channel in an interview from Washington broadcast on June 11 that "the opposition, without all the facts, gave their one-sided opinion that sending troops to Iraq is wrong... They are entitled to their views, but

the government of India will take its decision based on national interest".

According to officials familiar with the debate which preceded Monday's CCS meeting, Mr Advani's public attack on the critics of deployment did not sit well with other ministers. Officials say the Bush administration had set great store by Mr Advani's stature within the government and were confident he would prevail. "He was given prime ministerial treatment in Washington on the assumption that he could swing the decision," said an official. "But the fact is that it is Vajpayee who calls the shots." Mr Vajpayee had reservations about any prospective mission's legal status.

Ultimately, the deteriorating security situation inside Iraq, the lack of enthusiasm among Iraq's neighbours like Iran, Saudi Arabia and even Turkey for any Indian involvement, and the fact that the "political consensus was not to send troops" all led the CCS to say no to the US.

Another official told 'The Times of India' that the main stumbling block as far as the CCS was concerned was that the US request for Indian troops "did not fit into any of the known UN formulations".

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RSS caution on dealing with Pak., China

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By J.V. Siva Prasanna Kumar

KANYAKUMARI, JULY 6. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) today urged the Government to devise a policy on Pakistan and China in the light of the 1994 unanimous resolution in Parliament on Pakistan occupied Kashmir and the 1962 resolution on 'winning back every inch of land occupied by China'.

A resolution adopted at the concluding session of its two-day national executive meet

here, the RSS lauded India's efforts to improve its relations with the neighbouring countries, but cautioned that the Centre should not 'ignore the lessons of history' while dealing with Pakistan and China. India should keep in mind the role played by them in the past before negotiating any peace settlements.

Pakistan had 'gifted' a part of Jammu and Kashmir, which it had 'annexed' to China, and the latter had 'occupied' a large tract of

land in Ladakh region through aggression. China was 'not ready' to accept India's sovereignty over Sikkim and 'portrayed' Arunachal Pradesh as part of its territory in its maps and expanded its diplomatic influence in Nepal and Myanmar.

Therefore, the Centre has to exercise caution in negotiating for peace and should not 'compromise' on national integrity and sovereignty, the RSS said.

THE HINDU

7 JUL 2003

National honour cannot be sacrificed: Natwar Singh

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, JULY 4. The Congress is opposed to the idea of sending troops to Iraq as national honour cannot be "sacrificed" for the sake of a few "contracts", the Congress Working Committee (CWC) member and Rajya Sabha MP, K. Natwar Singh, said today.

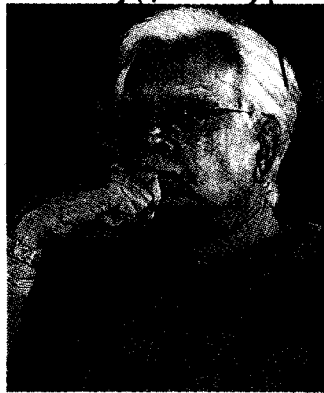
Talking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Singh said that it was being projected that if India sent troops the United States would "show-er bounties" on us. "India is not some third-rate country," he added.

"We want the closest relations with America... (but) we should tell them frankly as friends that under the present circumstances, India can't oblige them (by sending troops). And, I have no doubt that the Americans will understand. Why should bilateral relations be dependent on this particular matter," he asked.

The U.S., he said, was "desperate" to get Indian troops because then it could tell others, "look, a great country like India has sent its soldiers". "Foreign Secretary (Kanwal) Sibal didn't have to go to Washington to discover the "grey areas" and "ambiguities" in (the U.N. Security Council) Resolution 1483. They have been staring us in the face since the day the Resolution was adopted... on May 22."

According to him, Resolution 1483 does not authorise countries to send their troops to Iraq. It specifically mentions that the U.S. and Britain, as occupying powers, will be solely in charge.

"If that is the case, then how does this Government even consider the request of the Americans," Mr. Singh asked pointing out that it was the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, who had suggested in her meeting with the Prime



Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, on June 15, that other political parties and Iraq's neighbours be consulted. Key countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, China, Russia, Canada, France, Germany and Mexico were not planning to send their troops, then "why India," he asked. Favouring the adoption of a new resolution by the Security Council to authorise the dispatch of troops, Mr. Singh suggested that the Vajpayee Government work in this direction. "If you involve the U.N., you will get any number of countries to come for peacekeeping."

The April 8 Parliament resolution on Iraq was "unanimous" and the NDA Government was committed to it. The Government had sanctioned Rs.100 crores for humanitarian aid to Iraq and it should "adopt the non-military route" to begin with. India should send doctors, medicines, teachers and engineers and, in the meantime, work for a Security Council resolution specifically establishing a U.N. peacekeeping force for Iraq.

Mr. Singh said that the U.S. had not been able to find any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in the last four months and there was "anarchy and absence of government in Iraq". The

U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, had said that Americans would be looked upon as liberators in Iraq. "They are being looked upon as invaders and occupiers. It was a total misreading of the sentiments of the Islamic world," Mr. Singh said. Asked about press reports that the Congress stand was "ambiguous", Mr. Singh said this was "deliberate disinformation". The party's position was clear and had been spelt out in Sonia Gandhi's letter to the Prime Minister on June 4 and the subsequent meeting on June 15.

On whether the U.S. would target Iran next, Mr. Singh said "we hope not" and that it was "unlikely". The Congress also favoured an all-party meeting to discuss the troops' question before Parliament convened on July 21 as this was one of the issues that would figure.

The Congress leader, who also heads the AICC's foreign affairs department, said that though he did not have authentic information, the general impression was that the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, was not "favourably inclined" to sending troops to Iraq.

Mr. Singh said the Congress was not suggesting any confrontation with the U.S. "We want their understanding." During the last five decades, there had been a broad consensus on foreign policy issues and this consensus should not be eroded now. "If the Americans want you (India), they can get a Security Council resolution tomorrow. India should request them to strengthen the U.N., strengthen multilateralism. What is happening now is high-handed unilateralism." On the troops' issue, the only consideration, Mr. Singh added, should be "India's honour and national interest".

FRIDAY, JULY 4, 2003

DON'T SEND INDIAN TROOPS TO IRAQ

THE VAJPAYEE GOVERNMENT appears to be considering a course of dangerous adventurism that would surrender the nation's long cherished independence in foreign policy, ignoring in the process the national interest, a categorical parliamentary resolution, the overwhelming national mood and the disastrous consequences of a precedent setting decision. After the Government's failure to construct a political consensus, any decision to agree to the American request to send Indian soldiers to serve on the so-called stabilisation force in occupied Iraq will be illegal and unacceptable — as illegitimate as the Bush administration's unprecedented invasion of a sovereign nation. The unilateral military campaign founded on the dangerous Bush "doctrine of pre-emption" and on blatant falsehood and deceit — the hearings in the committees of the American Congress and the House of Commons were a revelation — is sought to be legitimised *post facto* through the induction of soldiers from willing or bendable nations around the globe. Faced with the hazards of occupation and perhaps surprised by the intensity of opposition and unprepared for it, Washington is desperately searching for partners to bail it out. Donald Rumsfeld, the voice of the ultra right group that has taken a stranglehold at the White House, has wondered with unconcealed exasperation what else Washington can do besides asking 20 nations through threats and offers of bounties to help "stabilise" the occupation. The face of unilateralism stands exposed.

India should immediately declare that it will not join this unjust venture and that Indian soldiers are not mercenaries but part of a professional force, which is not ready to give up its blemishless record of performing peace-keeping operations under the United Nations for more than half a century. The apparent vacillation raises the suspicion that the Government is persisting with its clandestine efforts to strike a deal with the U.S. It is time the Government ended this dangerous exercise and told the U.S. that it is unable to participate. It needs to put into practice the commitment it made in the recently concluded Joint Declaration with China to "strengthen multipolarity at the international level." New Delhi's dilemma is no doubt understandable. A Government that deludes itself with visions of great power status and rushes to Washington at the drop of a militant bomb must find the American pressure quite unsettling. Its ideological affinity with the leading lights of this Republican administration and its inexplicable obsession with regional competitive diplomacy — the recent Advani visit to the U.S. coincided with the tragi-comic talk of an Asian NATO — have reduced its options and constrained its independence of action, with little room for manoeuvre. But it will be abdicating its national responsibility if it pledges the country's resources and the lives of Indian soldiers to American empire building. That some sections in the Government are inclined to go along with the American strategy has been evident for quite some time. The Deputy Prime Minister's high decibel campaign in the U.S., the effort to persuade the Congress party to get on board, American spokesmen's unashamed expositions on the benefits that can accrue to India through oil deals and reconstruction contracts, the Pentagon team's well-publicised visit to Delhi to offer "clarifications" and the Foreign Secretary's just-concluded visit to Washington are all part of this campaign to secure legitimacy for an apparently imminent decision to fall in line behind the U.S and play

junior partner to it.

With the legitimacy and acceptance of the American-British occupation being challenged every day on the streets of Baghdad and other populated centres, any Government sensitive to the national interest should have seen through the high pressure sales campaign to get India to send troops. The unilateralist U.S. is eager to share the burdens of occupation. In this big business of war, there is nothing that India stands to gain through its participation in the occupation. Nothing that has been dangled before the BJP Government is worth the heavy price in terms of loss of goodwill that the country will pay in the long run by supporting the U.S. Government. Spin-doctors have ceaselessly cited the offer of oil and contracts. But India does not require the back door to enter Iraq with which it has had a fruitful, longstanding bilateral political, economic and trade relationship, without American patronage. It will be ready to deal with a free and democratic Iraq, the ties founded on equality and shared experiences. Among the other "benefits" on the table is a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council. This, again, is India's due and can be no superpower's gift, considering its unstinted support to the world body and its Charter and its participation in the U.N.'s wide-ranging activities. The same evasion and prevarication on the part of the Government is evident over the very real concerns that have been expressed over command and control, the fears being sought to be skirted through vague talk of "independent" sectors of operation parcelled out by the U.S. as it retains control of the overall strategy and pulls out its men. Again, as the Congress party has pointed out, this will be another unacceptable departure from the fundamental principle that Indian soldiers on global duty will operate only under the U.N. flag and U.N. command. The U.N. Security Council resolution 1483, which recognises the reality of the occupation, leaves no scope for dual military command.

The nation will also reject the disingenuous argument of Government spokesmen that India will send troops if the Iraqis want them. Such obfuscation cannot hide the hard reality that it will be a long time before the free Iraqi voice is heard. The trigger-happy American actions in the past month carry a clear message: the U.S., in no hurry to look for those weapons of mass destruction whose presumed existence brought it to Iraq, has come to stay as it consolidates its hold and sets up its own political-military arrangement with assistance from willing, subservient nations. There is one more combined message from the streets of Iraq: a widening, deepening resistance that seeks an end to the occupation and early return of a semblance of normality under free conditions. In fact, all the debate on the post-Saddam Hussein Iraq has unfortunately pushed to the sidelines the one issue that demands immediate international attention: the very urgent requirements of the Iraqi people whose lives have been traumatised by the indiscriminate, hi-tech bombing campaign of the U.S. and the U.K. India is eminently suited to answer this call from the Iraqi people. It should move to bring the U.N. and its agencies back into the reconstruction and rehabilitation effort. The world body has experience and expertise in nation-building as evidenced in East Timor and more recently in Afghanistan where it is an effort in progress. Instead of seeking to play proxy to the superpower, New Delhi should work in coordination with countries such as Russia, China, France, Germany and Iran to empower the U.N. to take over and restore Iraq to the Iraqis.

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'DECISION-MAKING PROCESS ON' 'Grey areas' in U.N. resolution on Iraq: Sibal

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JULY 3. The Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal, says that the decision-making process on sending troops to Iraq as part of a "stabilisation" force is still continuing, with the Government in the stages of assessing and evaluating the situation in its entirety.

He said there were also "grey areas" and "unresolved ambiguities" in the United Nations resolution on Iraq that would have to be addressed and clarified before any formal decision could be made. New Delhi was also seeing if a "more explicit U.N. mandate" could be obtained.

Arguing that there would have been "absolutely no hesitation" on the part of India if there had been a clear-cut resolution from the United Nations Security Council, Mr. Sibal said that India's track record on peacekeeping was for all to see.

"Normally, India has responded to U.N. mandates; but since there are grey areas, it is necessary for India to be very careful in what it does," Mr. Sibal told mediapersons at the Indian Embassy here on Wednesday.

Mr. Sibal, who is here for the first meeting of the High Technology Cooperation Group, also met top officials of the administration including the National Security Adviser, the Deputy Secretary of Defence and the Deputy Secretary of State. While bilateral relations, including the recent initiatives in the subcontinent were discussed, the issue of sending Indian troops to Iraq also figured.

Mr. Sibal said that even if India decided not to send troops to Iraq, it would not have much impact on bilateral relations for, among other things, the U.S. understood the difficulties of democratic India. He insisted that there was "no pressure" from Washington and that the subject had been raised in a rather "low key" manner.

"...Whatever decision India takes, I don't think it will have an adverse effect on our relations... we are on our way to developing an increasingly

cooperative relationship and no single issue will determine the quality of our relationship," Mr. Sibal said.

Asked if the Bush administration has "convinced" India on the troops issue, Mr. Sibal said that this was not the correct approach. "They (meaning the U.S.) don't have to convince us. We have to convince ourselves."

Mr. Sibal characterised his visit to Washington as part of the ongoing decision-making process and said that there were many components to this, including the fuller assessment of India's Ambassador to Iraq after his meeting with the top American administrator, Paul Bremer, and discussions with local Iraqi leaders; and New Delhi's interaction with the countries concerned, including Iraq's neighbours.

The Government of India is now studying the pros and cons of the issue and heading this list will be India's own long-term interests in Iraq; its interests in the region; bilateral relations with the U.S.; the real issues of command and control, funding and the rules of engagement and the evolving political perspective in Iraq itself, it is said.

On the subject of the High Technology Cooperation, Mr. Sibal said the old days of Washington pressuring New Delhi to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty and Fullscope Safeguards were no longer there. Rather, the two sides were into a robust dialogue involving the private sector on a range of high tech areas that included, for instance, in the first meeting here, information technology, life sciences, nano technology and defence technology.

"Both sides discussed changes in policy and regulation that can facilitate such trade and strengthen controls on the possible diversion of sensitive items. Today's meeting of the HTCCG was an important step in this process," the U.S. Under Secretary of Commerce, Kenneth Juster, said in a statement. The second meeting of the group will be in New Delhi in November next.

Neighbours' nod to troops in Iraq

Tr-b
29/6

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, June 28: Union minister of state for foreign affairs Digvijay Singh and senior diplomats have been despatched to West Asia to gauge what the countries in the region feel about India deploying troops in Iraq.

First reports indicate that most of Iraq's neighbours are not opposed to India participating in US efforts to stabilise the war-ravaged country.

Barring Syria, most other countries like Kuwait, Turkey and Jordan have responded positively. Saudi Arabia, another important regional player, is not against India's presence either.

But Iran, which fears that after Iraq it may be the next country to attract US attention, is not too happy that India might work closely with the US in its neighbourhood.

Syria, which has been vocal and active in opposing the US-led war in Iraq, has made it clear that it does not see a role for India right now.

Syrian officials have told their Indian counterparts that they feel last month's UN Security Council resolution does not give Delhi the right to deploy troops in Iraq.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee chaired an informal meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security today but discussed the troop deployment briefly as his China visit was the focus. Indications are the Prime Minister may convene another committee meeting soon.

The US request to India to participate in the stabilisation effort in Iraq has been lying with Delhi for some time now. Earlier this month, a team from the Pen-

tagon held detailed discussions with Indian officials to clarify some of Delhi's queries.

Sources say the US is yet to reply to some of the questions, including a query if the Security Council can pass another resolution paving the way for India to deploy troops.

If the Vajpayee government accedes to the US request, it will mark a major shift in Indian foreign policy. So far, Indian troops have participated in peacekeeping duties in many troublespots, but always under the UN.

India is being asked for the first time to deploy troops under a different control. Given that some Indians are still anti-US, the Vajpayee regime will have to tread cautiously in making a final decision.

The government has to assess the mood both at home and outside, especially in the Islamic world and West Asia.

Indian officials say that getting UN sanction to send troops will only solve the problem partially. There are other issues that worry Delhi.

For instance, it is not known if they will have independent charge of a region or will be directly under US command. Nor is it clear how Indian troops will take to American control.

Even if the Indians are given a relatively free hand in controlling a particular sector — there are indications that the US might divide Iraq into five sectors for efficient administration — Delhi also has to worry about how Iraqis themselves will react.

Officials are not sure how post-war Iraq will shape up and what the interim government will be like.

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29 JUN 2003

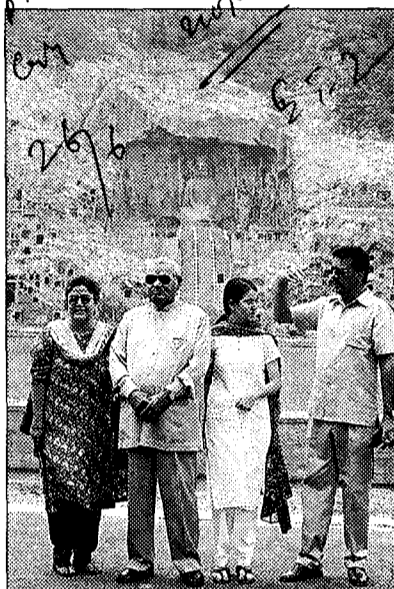
THE TELEGRAPH

Party Wants Govt To Clarify Position On Sikkim, Tibet; Left Happy Cong backs stand on China

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 25 JUNE

THE Congress' response to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's China visit on Wednesday was by and large encouraging, even though it raised concerns and sought clarifications over reported concessions made by the government over Tibet and Sikkim in the joint declaration signed between the two countries. While asserting that the visit was a continuation of the "historic process" started by Rajiv Gandhi in 1998 and carried forward by P.V. Narasimha Rao, the party said it will formulate its full response only after studying the joint declaration issued in Beijing on Tuesday.

"We are studying whether greater accommodation on Tibet and Sikkim has been shown without corresponding reciprocity," a statement issued by the AICC said. The cautious approach notwithstanding, party leaders indicated that they may not have much to disagree with the government although maintaining that clarifications were required over the assurances made with regard to Tibet and Sikkim. "We want to know if the government has done enough hard bargaining on these issues," a party leader said.



ALL IN THE FAMILY: Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee with his daughter Namita Kaul (L), son-in-law Ranjan Bhattacharya and granddaughter Niharika at the Buddhist caves in Luoyang on Wednesday. — AFP

While affirming that reciprocity was an accepted part of bilateral diplomacy, party leaders said the Prime Minister will have to take the nation into confidence on his assessment over the visit. Pointing to the fact that China's association with Pakistan was hardly a secret, as it had helped Islamabad in expanding its nuclear and missile base, Congress leaders said there was even a greater need to ensure that India did not end up as without any advantages.

Welcoming the joint declaration made by the prime ministers of India and China, the CPI on Wednesday said irrespective of the social system and governments, amicable relations between the two countries will go a long way in consolidating peace and stability in the region.

"It will open new vistas for development and close economic cooperation between countries of Asia, as well as the entire developing world," a party release said.

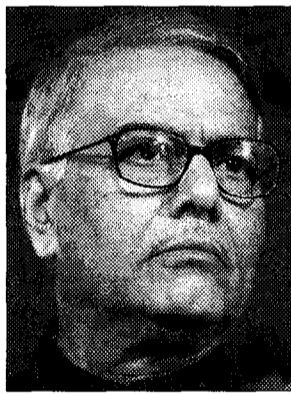
CPI has always been of the opinion that hostility between the two great neighbours was never sustainable, it said, adding the declaration has rightly recognised this fact and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit has carried forward the process of normalisation of relations.

It's a win-win situation, says Sinha

Beijing
25 JUNE

TERMING the accords reached by India and China as a "win-win" situation for both of them, external affairs minister Yashwant Sinha today said the border agreement has "recognised" the Nathu la Pass in Sikkim as a "border pass" between the two countries. "We have signed a border agreement in which Nathu la Pass has been recognised as a border pass between China and India through which trade will be facilitated," he said in an interview to BBC's Asia Today programme.

Asked if this meant a tacit admission by China over India's claims on Sikkim, Sinha said



SINHA: HIGH HOPES

"you can read the language for yourself. I do not know why there should be any doubt about anything". Sinha, who is accom-

panying Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on his six-day visit to China, said that two border passes in Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal have been recognised by China for border trade.

On whether there was any confusion on the Indian position on Tibet, he said: "If you look at the language which India has consistently used over the last 50 years, you will find that we have consistently taken a position". Sinha said "I would say there is no change in India's position and it continues to be consistent with the past positions we have taken.

"The Tibet Autonomous Region was created in 1965 and after that one has been referring to that part as Tibet Autonomous Region". On whether there is

any change vis-a-vis India's stand regarding Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, Sinha said "I don't think there is any change there". On whether both India and China were 'happy' over the understandings reached, he said "you can have a win-win situation for both".

The decision to upgrade talks on the border issue with the appointment of special political representatives, was described by the Minister as a "very big development". "This was an outstanding visit. The Chinese side said the first visit by Prime Minister Vajpayee as foreign minister in 1979 had succeeded in ice breaking. And this time, they said it has been the beginning of a new era".

— PTI

ইরাকে সেনা পাঠানো নিয়ে সরব বিরোধীরা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৪
জুন— ইরাকে সেনা পাঠানো নিয়ে
মার্কিন প্রশাসনের সঙ্গে আলোচনার
প্রক্রিয়াকে 'জাতীয় স্বার্থের পরিপন্থী'
বলেছে সি পি এম-সহ বেশ কয়েকটি
বিরোধী দল। দলগুলির বক্তব্য, বিজেপি
সরকার যে ভাবে আলোচনা চালাচ্ছে
তাতে সংসদে গৃহীত প্রস্তাবকেও অমান্য
করা হচ্ছে। রাজ্যসভায় সি পি এমের
দলনেতা নীলোৎপল বসু আজ বলেছেন,
"সংসদে যখন ইরাকে মার্কিন অভিযানের
নিন্দা করে প্রস্তাব পাশ হয়েছে, তখন কী
ভাবে এই আলোচনা হচ্ছে?" তাঁর আরও
অভিযোগ, সেনা পাঠানো নিয়ে
সরকারের কোনও নীতি নেই। তারা
কোনও অবস্থানই জানাচ্ছে না।

সি পি এমের সঙ্গে সুর মিলিয়ে এন
ডি এ সরকারের সমালোচনা করেছে
লোকজনশক্তি, সমাজবাদী পার্টি, রাষ্ট্রীয়
জনতা দল, ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লক, আর এস পি,
সি পি আই, সংযুক্ত জনতা দল।
লোকসভায় সি পি এমের নেতা সোমনাথ
চট্টোপাধ্যায়ের লেটারহেডে এই সংক্রান্ত
একটি প্রেস বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে নাম নেই প্রাক্তন
প্রধানমন্ত্রী চন্দ্রশেখরর। নীলোৎপল
বলেছেন, সবাইকে যোগাযোগ করা সম্ভব
হয়নি, তাই কারও কারও নাম নেই। তবে
বিষয়টি নিয়ে সংসদের আসন্ন
অধিবেশনে বিরোধীরা সরব হবেন বলে
জানানো হয়েছে সি পি এমের তরফ
থেকে। কংগ্রেস অবশ্য মার্কিন প্রশাসনের
সঙ্গে কথা বলার প্রকাশ্য বিরোধিতা
করেনি। বরং সনিয়া গান্ধী যখন
বাজপেয়ীর সঙ্গে এই নিয়ে আলোচনা
করতে গিয়েছিলেন, তখন তাঁর প্রস্তাব
ছিল, আমেরিকার কাছ থেকে সেনা
পাঠানোর বিভিন্ন খুঁটিটির ব্যাখ্যা চেয়ে
পাঠাক সরকার।

জেরুজালেম, ২৪ জুন— অন্তত
১৫০ জন প্যালেষ্টাইনিকে আজ ওয়েস্ট
ব্যাঙ্কে গ্রেফতার করেছে ইজরায়েলি
সেনা। হামাস জঙ্গিদের সন্ধানে কাল
সারা রাত অভিযান চলে। পাশাপাশি,
মার্কিন জাতীয় উপদেষ্টা কভোলিজা
রাইস এখানে আসন্ন শান্তি আলোচনা
ফলপ্রসূ হতে চলেছে বলে সেনা সূত্রে
জানানো হয়েছে। — পি টি আই

25 JUN 2003

Constructive Engagement

India Must Send Troops to Iraq

By K Subrahmanyam

There is a healthy debate in the country on the issue of sending Indian troops to Iraq as part of the stabilisation force. At present, the US has 1,46,000 troops in Iraq, just 5,000 less than the number used for the invasion. There are also 12,000 British troops. More forces have been contributed by Poland, Italy, Spain, Ukraine, Denmark and Netherlands. Turkey, which opposed the war, has now offered a contingent of 1,200-1,800 for Iraq's reconstruction.

Germany, another opponent of the war, has offered to send technical personnel for reconstruction. Washington's purpose in soliciting troops from other countries, particularly from India, appears to be to recall the troops sent out a year earlier, give an international facade to the force and reduce costs. General Musharraf has indicated that Pakistan would send troops if asked to do so.

We must approach the issue from a perspective of national interest. The US ambassador in Delhi has said that a negative decision by India will not affect the Indo-US relationship and New Delhi's decision should be based on calculations of national interest. Quite obviously, US policy-makers failed to assess the nature and magnitude of governing Iraq as an occupying power. The US army chief General Shinseki told the Congress that it would need 200,000 persons and two years to complete the task. But he was rebuked by his civilian masters for that statement. While the Kurdish and Shia areas in Iraq are relatively manageable, guerilla war seems to have broken out in Sunni areas around Baghdad, Falluja and Tikrit. There is speculation that this could have been pre-planned by Saddam Hussein and his associates.

Stabilisation is the process of restoring the governance which collapses either during a civil conflict or due to an invasion. Stabilisation forces have been operating in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. In Iraq, the Ba'ath Party was all pervasive and by outlawing it along with the earlier military campaign there has been a decapitation of the administrative structure. The result has been anarchy and chaos. Iraqis, exercising their full freedom, are demonstrating for the setting up of an interim Iraqi administration and an early American withdrawal. The Americans appear totally unprepared to rectify the enormous damage they inflicted on Iraq's infrastructure — power, water supply, sanitation etc. Their earlier plan of installing an Iraqi administration based on anti-Saddam Iraqi exile groups and Kurdish parties has proved a non-starter. Saddam Hussein had ensured that no indigenous opposition group survived on which Washington can rely. The US is also wary of the Shia clergy which commands

influence over the majority because of suspicions that it may lean towards Iran.

When Security Council resolution 1483 was adopted with no opposition (Syria being absent), France, Russia and Germany decided that despite their opposition to the war, nothing should stand in the way of helping the people of Iraq. They agreed to lifting sanctions and sending in the stabilisation force. Though the UN's role was minimal, the resolution legitimised the occupying authority. That was pragmatic realpolitik under the prevalent circumstances aimed at helping the Iraqis.

The stabilisation process will help set up an Iraqi interim administration, draw up an Iraqi constitution, put it to a referendum and then hold an election leading to a representative Iraqi government and US withdrawal. As of now, Washington has not come out with a road map for these steps. This is a lengthy process. There are two different precedents for this. The first, which perhaps dominates US thinking, is the example of Japan after World War II when the US handled the process on its own. The second is East Timor where the transition was carried out by the UN.

There is a good case for India helping the stabilisation process by sending troops to Iraq, not merely to oblige Washington but to help the Iraqi people. France, Germany and Russia do not think that by agreeing to resolution 1483 they have approved the US aggression. Our attitude should be similarly pragmatic, forward-looking and mindful of our national interest. We should bear in mind that Islamabad is ready to send troops to Iraq and thereby increase US dependence on itself.

It is only by agreeing to consider the proposition of sending troops to Iraq that India will be in a position to raise various issues with the US on the road map for an interim administration, constitution-making, elections and total transfer of power to an Iraqi representative government. It may be necessary to discuss how the incipient insurgency is going to be handled. Since the Americans are interested in wiping out the Saddam loyalists, they may prefer to handle it themselves. But that has to be ascertained. Then there are issues like command and control over our troops and the sector they will be deployed in. When these issues are discussed it may as well emerge that there may have to be greater involvement of the UN and even a new UN resolution.

Our stand should be to engage the US on these issues and not just reject outright our participation in the stabilisation process on the ground that Washington is guilty of aggression. It undoubtedly was, but it is not going to help the Iraqis.



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22/6

ISSUE OF TROOPS TO IRAQ (w) g f plain

NDA leaves it to PM

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 21. The National Democratic Alliance tonight left it to the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to take an appropriate decision in response to the U.S. request for sending troops to Iraq.

At a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister here, the NDA said the decision should be taken keeping in view the "interest of India and the people of Iraq."

The Government, on its part, announced that the process of consultation with political parties would continue after Mr. Vajpayee returns from his trip to China.

The Shiv Sena conveyed its opposition though it went along with the final formulation that the Prime Minister was best positioned to firm up India's stand.

The Defence Minister and NDA convener, George Fernandes, told correspondents later that all those who attended the meeting had placed their views but said since the issue under consideration was "ticklish, who better than the Prime Minister would know."

Mr. Fernandes, who was flanked by the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, at the briefing, said the team from Pentagon which had arrived here last Monday had not responded to all the questions New Delhi had.

"There were a number of questions (to the U.S. team); some they were able to reply and some they have taken back. We are also making our own assessment," Mr. Sinha said.

Mr. Fernandes said the request from the U.S. administration for troops came amid indications that they would be

positioned in the northern part of that country. He said this area had borders with Iran on one side and Turkey on the other, with Kurds in between.

The NDA meeting was preceded by one of the Cabinet Committee on Security. It is understood that the CCS took stock of the current situation in Iraq. The NDA meeting follows the one the Prime Minister had with the Congress team on Sunday last.

The PMK MP, E. Ponnuswamy, told *The Hindu* that the party has suggested that the Government consider the U.S. request also in the light of previ-

ous experience.

He said that during the war in Afghanistan, Washington preferred to side with Pakistan for strategic considerations and was now turning to India. While leaving it to the Prime Minister, he suggested that the decision be taken keeping in view the country's self-respect.

The Shiv Sena MP, Chandrakant Khaire, said that later the party was opposed to sending of troops considering the U.S. attitude towards New Delhi vis-a-vis Pakistan's role in encouraging terrorists' acts and earlier experience, including peace-keeping in Sri Lanka.

Iraqi opinion being ascertained: Advani

By Anjali Mody

NEW DELHI, JUNE 21. Whether Iraqis want Indian troops in their country or not is one of the issues that will inform the decision about sending troops to Iraq, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, said today. Another question that would have to be settled before a decision was taken was when an Iraqi administration would be in place, he said. Mr. Advani was responding to questions from journalists, en route to Ahmedabad by a special plane to attend two functions today.

To a question on whether a decision to send the troops was imminent, he said that there were "lots of factors" to consider. The two which concerned the Government most were "what do the people of Iraq feel about this and what are the plans for restoring an Iraqi administration?" Asked how the Government would ascertain Iraqi opinion in the absence of a representative administration, Mr. Advani said that a team of four Indian military officials was in Iraq and a "direct report from there" was awaited.

Asked whether the Government was inclined to send troops to Iraq, Mr. Advani said that it was in India's interest to "have a presence in that region". "It will be good for us and good for Iraq," he added. Asked whether the Government had not considered reconvening Parliament to consider the issue, he said "our disapproval of American action is there".

'India blocked Pak. entry into ARF'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JUNE 20. Islamabad has accused New Delhi of blocking its entry into the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) at the meeting held at Phnom Penh on June 18.

In yet another carefully-drafted statement, the Pakistan Foreign Office maintained that "in view of the recent positive initiatives taken by Pakistan and India to normalise their relations, Pakistan along with other ARF Members had hoped that India would play a constructive and responsible role rather than impede Pakistan's membership of the Forum".

A spokesman of the Pakistan Foreign Office said that Pakis-

tan was grateful to the 10-member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for their agreement to accept it as a participant in the ARF. He regretted that the ARF could not admit Pakistan as a member in its 10th meeting at Phnom Penh because of India's strong opposition to Pakistan's candidature.

"This is despite the fact that Pakistan's entry into the Forum enjoys overwhelming support by ARF members," he said. Though the spokesman did not say it in so many words, the statement clearly implied that it was New Delhi, which was the main stumbling block to its entry into ASEAN Regional Forum.

It is for the third time in the

recent days that Pakistan has complained against some of the statements of Indian leaders and officials and said that they went against the spirit of the hand of friendship extended by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee. In the last statement, Islamabad had said that such statements were 'uncalled for and unhelpful' in carrying forward the peace process.

The official observed that the ASEAN Foreign Ministers, in their earlier meeting on 16 June, had welcomed the recent positive developments in the relations between India and Pakistan, which they felt were an encouraging steps towards a fully normalised relationship between the two sides.

More clarifications sought from U.S., says Fernandes

By Our Special Correspondent

NDT
W/b

NEW DELHI, JUNE 19. The Government is waiting for further clarifications from the Pentagon on some crucial questions before finalising its position on dispatching troops to Iraq.

While the discussions held on Monday did cover some ground, questions relating to the involvement of the United Nations, logistic Indian support and the command and control mechanism of the Indian troops remained unanswered, the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, said in the first official expression on the outcome of the talks between Indian and American officials on the question of sending Indian troops to Iraq.

At the same time, India was prepared to play a bigger role in providing humanitarian assistance in the form of medical relief to the people of Iraq. An advance team of military doctors and Foreign Office officials had reached Iraq to prepare for the opening of an Indian Government-operated hospital. The Government also planned to send a "floating" hospital to Basra, but it did not materialise. "We will give relief of every kind to Iraqi civilians," he reiterated.

On the discussions held earlier this week with a Pentagon team, Mr. Fernandes said: "No decision has been taken. Our officials discussed the issue with Pentagon officials. There were many questions and we did not receive replies to all of them." The U.S. team, comprising civilian and military officials of the Pentagon, was asked to

provide three more clarifications. Of the three, involvement of the U.N. was the "biggest of them all". Asked whether another Pentagon team would be visiting the country to respond to the unanswered questions, Mr. Fernandes said: "Let them take their time and decide. There is no need for us to comment on that now." At the same time, he indicated India's willingness to extend relief to war-battered Iraq.

On issues impacting rapprochement with Pakistan, Mr. Fernandes said the Government was committed to talks, regardless of success or failure. "One should not be sensitive about every statement or action," was his reply to questions on reports of American plans to equip Pakistan with advanced fighter planes and the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's reported observations on "recurrence" of Kargil.

He said there was nothing unusual about the U.S. equipping Pakistan with military hardware. "Why should we get worked up by this? Pakistan has sourced arms from America for 50 years just as we buy and, sometimes, sell military equipment." On Gen. Musharraf's purported comments, Mr. Fernandes said the implication would be different if the complete wording of the General's statement was taken into account.

The Minister made these observations after launching a book 'Intelligence — A security weapon' by the former Director of the Intelligence Bureau, D.C. Pathak.

'India can play a major role': Page 11

20 JUN 2003

THE HINDU

Sinha pours cold water on Pak ASEAN hopes...

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

PAKISTAN'S efforts to be included in the ASEAN Regional Forum came to a grinding halt after New Delhi, in the ongoing meeting of the ARF foreign ministers at Phnom Penh, drew the forum's attention to the procedures that had been overlooked in the hurried bid to examine Islamabad's case for membership.

Pakistan, which was upbeat after ASEAN countries gave a nod on Tuesday to lift the moratorium on membership of the ARF so as to accommodate Islamabad, failed to gain entry after the ARF could not reach a consensus neither on lifting the moratorium nor on including an additional member on a case-by-case basis.

It is understood that External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha intervened during the ARF meeting today where the issue of including Pakistan came up for discussion. He apparently objected to the manner in which the Pakistan case had



Colin Powell with Yashwant Sinha during their bilateral meeting in Phnom Penh on Wednesday. Reuters

found its way into the ministerial meeting of the ARF.

According to official sources, Sinha highlighted the fact that such cases should first be discussed at the meeting of senior officials which precede the ministerial meeting. It must be noted that the issue of expanding the membership of ARF was deferred at the meeting of senior officials in April as the ASEAN itself was then undecided on lifting

the moratorium on expansion.

However, with the help of some hectic lobbying by Malaysia within the ASEAN, Pakistan was able to swing matters as the foreign ministers of the grouping decided on Tuesday to relax the moratorium and include Pakistan. Within the next 24 hours, the matter was on the ARF list in an apparent violation of procedures that go into setting the agenda for

the ministerial-level meet.

While pointing out the procedural lapses in tabling the matter, Sinha cited previous ARF discussions and resolutions which emphasise the principles, criteria and procedures for including new members. In this context, official sources said, the External Affairs Minister made specific mention of earlier discussions to include countries which have a geographical footprint in the region.

In fact, the point was also raised by other ARF members like Australia, New Zealand and the European Union at today's meeting. They apparently questioned the logic of pushing in for Pakistan while ignoring the bid of Timor Leste which geographically qualifies for the slot.

During the deliberations, Sinha also made the broader point that ARF should, as of now, concentrate on consolidating rather than take up the issue of expansion. He also stressed the need for greater co-operation on meeting the challenge of terrorism and diseases like AIDS.

...discusses troops for Iraq with Powell

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha and US Secretary of State Colin Powell today met on the sidelines of the ASEAN Regional Forum meeting of foreign Ministers at Phnom Penh and exchanged notes on bilateral matters including developments on the US request to send Indian troops to Iraq as part of a stabilisation force. In the 40-minute meeting, Powell raised the issue of sending troops to Iraq in the context of the recent visit by a team of senior Pentagon officials to New Delhi. Sinha presented India's viewpoint and the range of clarifications needed before India took any decision.

New Delhi has been seeking clarifications on the kind of tasks that its troops will have to undertake, whether the troops will be forced to open fire at any point, the likely duration of stay and the relationship of this force with the UN. This apart, the two leaders also held discussions on the security scenario in the region. Sinha underlined the sincerity of India's peace initiatives towards Pakistan and hoped that Islamabad would respond positively to the peace gestures made by PM A.B. Vajpayee.

He also highlighted the need for Pakistan to permanently end cross-border terrorism and clamp down on the terrorist infrastructure on its soil.

USA as partner, not commander

Srinjoy Chowdhury
In New Delhi

June 16. — If India does accept the invitation of the United States and sends a peacekeeping force to Iraq, jawans will be “answerable to the Indian flag” and “under Indian sovereign control” acting as “partners of the USA”.

This was decided during a four hour-long meeting today where the US team comprising State and Defence department officials, led by assistant secretary of defence Mr Peter Rodman, met officials from the MEA and defence ministry, led by joint secretary Mr BS Prakash. The Americans

suggested “independent operations” and a partnership between the USA and other countries. Mr Rodman also called on foreign secretary Mr Kanwal Sibal and Mr Brajesh Mishra.

Indian troops could be involved in reconstruction, civic action, distribution of

food, and peacekeeping. The first meeting was described by officials as a “familiarisation discussion”, adding that this was preliminary.

The Americans also outlined their future course in Iraq: The process of political activation and work towards developing a council of representatives comprising Iraqis has already begun.

Indian Oil for Iraqi oil

KUALA LUMPUR, June 16. — Indian Oil is exploring possibility of bidding for Iraqi oil in future export tenders, the company said today. “If there are tenders, we will look at the possibility of participating,” the IOL chairman said here today. “We have been processing Iraqi crude in the past and we look forward to future access.” — PTI

17 JUN 2003

THE STATESMAN

'OTHER COUNTRIES WILL ALSO BE CONSULTED'

No troops for Iraq without consensus, PM assures Sonia

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, JUNE 15. The Government today assured the Congress that it had not taken any decision on sending troops to Iraq and committed itself to not taking a final view without a national consensus — through consultations with Opposition and ruling parties — and discussions with other countries neighbouring Iraq.

The Government's view was articulated by the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, immediately after the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's consultations on the sensitive issue with the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, this evening.

The confabulations suggested that the Government would take its time on arriving at a decision on the issue which was fraught with grave implications at home and abroad notwithstanding the fact that a U.S. administration team is arriving here for discussions tomorrow on precisely this issue.

What is ironical is that while the Prime Minister today began the process of eliciting views from the Opposition not a word has come on where the Government stands or what it wishes to do. In fact, in a letter to Mr. Vajpayee on June 4 Ms. Gandhi had sought a clarification on the Government's exact position, and today's consultation was in response to this.

At the meeting Ms. Gandhi is believed to have reiterated her party's position communicated to Mr. Vajpayee on June 4:



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, with the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, and Congress leaders, Manmohan Singh and Natwar Singh, during a meeting at his residence in New Delhi on Sunday.

"The Congress would be totally opposed to the deployment of Indian troops under any arrangement other than a United Nations command or as part of a multi-national peacekeeping force that has the explicit mandate of the U.N."

Besides the Prime Minister, Mr. Sinha, the Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, and the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Brajesh Mishra, were present during the discussions.

The Congress team comprised Ms. Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Manmohan Singh, and the chairman of the party's foreign policy department, Nat-

war Singh. Later, Mr. Natwar Singh told reporters that they had suggested to the Government that it should consult other political parties as well as "important countries in the region". The party also advised discussions with France, Germany and Russia.

Mr. Natwar Singh was emphatic that the Government had conveyed: "No decision would be taken unless there was a national consensus evolved on the issue."

Mr. Sinha then confirmed that the "Government will hold discussions with countries in the region as well as with interested parties here, including those of the NDA".

A final view would be taken "in the best national interest".

In response to questions, he said that he was "not in a position to clarify right now" which countries India would hold discussions with on the issue.

The Congress had asked a number of questions (presumably including one on how the Government could think of Indian troop deployment in Iraq when a unanimous parliamentary resolution had called for withdrawal of all foreign troops from that country), Mr. Sinha said. The Congress was told that "the Government has not yet taken a decision".

Indo-U.S. talks today: Page 11

BE FIND

16 JUN 2003

Cong softens stand on troops to Iraq

K. SUBRAHMANYA

New Delhi, June 14: The Congress, the principal Opposition party in Parliament, may look the other way if the Vajpayee government eventually accedes to the American request and sends Indian troops to Iraq on a peacekeeping mission.

The party may maintain an ambivalent stand publicly, dropping in the process its hitherto strident opposition to the very idea of sending troops outside the command and control of the UN.

A day ahead of Congress president Sonia Gandhi's scheduled weekend meeting with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on this issue, the party's foreign policy and strategic affairs think-tank continued to in-

tensely debate the issue.

Hectic consultations within the Congress, including the crucial one the party chief had on Thursday, however, clearly pointed to a subtle review of the position that Sonia had conveyed to Vajpayee, on June 4, through a letter.

The June 4 stand of the party was to rigidly oppose the idea of sending troops and was in line with the spirit of the unanimous resolution of Parliament on the US-led war on Iraq in April. AICC foreign affairs department chairman K. Natwar Singh was the brain behind that letter.

However, in the context of the Prime Minister's invitation for talks and the persistent American requests over the last few days, the Singh line seems

to have come up for serious revision.

At the Thursday meeting Sonia had with party leaders, former foreign secretary J.N. Dixit, who is fast emerging as her advisor on security and strategic issues, made a counter-point.

Dixit is believed to have argued — with considerable suc-

cess — that the issue of sending troops should be decided while keeping the country's national interests in mind.

If the American side could help further pressurise Islamabad to cease cross-border terrorism and if India could advance its economic and high-tech interests, New Delhi should

agree to send troops. Not doing so could only jeopardise national security interests, the former bureaucrat is understood to have said.

About the problems associated with the prospect of sending the troops outside the UN framework, the former foreign secretary is believed to have said:

"Both the government and the Congress would have to positively interpret the latest UN resolution on Iraq." The resolution urged member states to help promote peace and stability in Iraq.

Dixit's thinking has not found instant favour with Singh, sources say. But Sonia's decision to bring the former foreign secretary into picture indicates her willingness to be flexible on the issue, they add.

Singh sought to save his line

from being replaced by Dixit's on a crucial policy issue.

The two divergent lines were again debated by Manmohan Singh, the Opposition leader in the Rajya Sabha, Shivraj Patil, the party's deputy leader in the Lok Sabha, chief spokesman S. Jaipal Reddy, Singh and Dixit, at a meeting late tonight.

Asked about the position the party might take at the meeting with the Prime Minister, party spokesman Abhishek Singhvi said: "We are open to constructive suggestions" from the Central government.

It is expected that Sonia would seek clarifications from Vajpayee on the benefits that would accrue to India from sending troops and on the possible conditions and arrangements under which the troops would operate.

Reservation row at rally

Ajmer, June 14 (PTI): Demanding reservation for Rajputs in the OBC category, several women activists of Rajput Aarakshan Manch briefly disrupted Congress president Sonia Gandhi's meeting here today.

As soon as Sonia started her speech, several women sitting behind the press enclosure in front of the podium got up displaying placards and demanding reservation for Rajputs. Security personnel and others tried to pacify them but they continued with their demonstration until Congress general secretary Ambika Soni came down from the podium and accepted their memorandum.

Troops to be sent if Congress agrees

Atal waits for Iraq consensus

RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, June 14: The Centre will not send Indian troops to Iraq unless a political consensus is thrashed out.

Official sources said the government's stand was likely to become clear tomorrow after Atal Bihari Vajpayee meets Congress chief Sonia Gandhi. The Prime Minister had set up the date to brief Sonia on Iraq.

The Congress has so far stridently opposed the American request to send troops but today there were indications it might pipe down. Former foreign secretary J.N. Dixit is believed to have advised Sonia that India's chances of bargaining with the US vis-à-vis Pakistan would strengthen if the troops were despatched. (See Page 6)

The Centre's prime concern is to secure the support of the Congress — the main Opposition party — as this will act as a buffer against any attack non-BJP parties might mount during Parliament's monsoon session next month.

The Sangh parivar and the BJP — which initially opposed the proposal — are inclined to back whatever decision the government takes without offering even token criticism.

"As of now, the government's stand is at the stage of asking questions and seeking clarifica-

MIXED BAG

GOVERNMENT

A Pentagon team is coming here shortly. The decision will be taken only after that

CONGRESS

We are open to constructive suggestions from the government

SAMAJWADI PARTY

The deputy PM went to the US and under pressure from that government, decided there itself to send Indian troops to Iraq. We condemn the government's decision

CPI

Iraq is under US-British occupation. Our troops should not work under their command

tions on the matter. It is not weighted on either side, for or against," a source said.

The sources indicated that even if the Congress came half way, a hasty decision would not be taken. Foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal will go to Washington in the first week of July to seek more clarifications.

Explaining the pros and cons, sources said there had been occasions when India had sent troops to foreign soil, as in the cases of Sri Lanka and Maldives. But that was on the invitation of the respective governments.

In the case of Iraq, Indian troops were likely to be "far more acceptable" as the relations between the countries were "harmonious". Moreover, India had enshrined its opposition to the presence of US-UK coalition forces in Iraq in a parliamentary resolution.

"In that sense, India could play the role of a genuine peace-keeper," a source said.

What is bothering the Centre is whether sending the troops — especially since it is not clear whether they will function under the command of the US or the UN — will be seen as compromising Indian sovereignty.

The Centre is also keen that the Indian Army should not be seen as a "mercenary arm of the US". "The ideal situation would be if the US were to give India total command over a part of Iraq without being under their command," a source said.

The BJP today toed the government line. "We are sure whatever decision the government takes will be in the country's interest," general secretary Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said.

The RSS, too, seemed to have toned down. "Our first reaction would still be to oppose it. But we do stand to gain in many ways if our troops are sent. It will give India a political edge over other countries in the quest for a political solution in Iraq..." an official said.

PM, SONIA TO DISCUSS ISSUE TODAY

Govt. yet to decide on sending troops to Iraq

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, JUNE 14. A possible deployment of Indian troops as part of a "stabilisation force" in Iraq is threatening to become a first rate political controversy. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, is scheduled to have a dialogue with the Congress president and Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, tomorrow. However, authoritative sources within the Vajpayee establishment assert that no decision has yet been taken and probably no decision would be taken without a reasonable political consensus i.e. the consent/concurrence of the principal Opposition party, Congress.

The "no-decision-yet" view was reaffirmed publicly by the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, in Dehra Dun today. After a passing out parade, he asserted that there was no decision as of now whether or not India should respond to the American suggestion.

On the other hand, the Samajwadi Party leader and former Defence Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, already criticised the

Vajpayee Government for "agreeing" to send troops. According to Mr. Yadav, a commitment to this effect has been made by the Deputy Prime Minister, Lal Krishna Advani, during his current visit to America.

However, authoritative sources dispute the perception that Mr. Advani has already committed India to sending its troops. Such a judgment would be unfair to Mr. Advani, the sources point out, notwithstanding the tone of Mr. Advani's media bytes in the United States.

It is pointed out that in fact it was Mr. Advani who had entered the caveat that any decision would come about only after a political consensus. The Government is mindful of different views, in and out of the ruling National Democratic Alliance as well as within the Sangh Parivar. The Prime Minister is reportedly not inclined to rush into any decision. Whatever the decision, it would not be taken in secret or suddenly.

At the same time, the Government is somewhat amused by the Opposition's overactivism in the matter. Those who are in a position to know insist that the U.S.

may be keen but this keenness can by no stretch of imagination be described as "American pressure". The Government itself has lots of questions that it would like to be answered. The American team from the Pentagon, scheduled to arrive on Monday, should provide some clarifications.

In any case, the chances of an early decision are rather remote. Mr. Advani comes back only on Tuesday, and then he goes to Mumbai for the BJP's "chintan baithak" (brain-storming session). That congregation lasts till June 20 and he is expected to stay till the end of the "baithak".

The Government leaders would be pre-occupied with matters internal. Maybe, the Prime Minister and Mr. Advani will get to hear the party's views on the question of troops deployment. The Prime Minister himself is scheduled to leave for China on June 22. There is no urgency that any decision should be arrived at on the only "open" day, June 21. So, in all probability no decision is expected until after Mr. Vajpayee's return from China.

Cong. sticks to stand: Page 8

THE HINDU

15 JUN 2003

TROOPS FOR IRAQ

Cong, BJP

back move

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A copy
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Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 13. — The chances of Indian troops being sent to Iraq have brightened with both the BJP and Congress indicating that they've no major problems with the move. While BJP leaders stressed "the need for a policy shift" and "the advantages from US pressure on Pakistan", the Congress, which had opposed the move earlier, today toned down its stand, saying it was "keeping an open mind" and "waiting for constructive inputs from the government".

The Prime Minister is scheduled to discuss the issue with Mrs Sonia Gandhi on Sunday. BJP leaders have said the Congress's consent is "necessary" before deciding to send troops to Iraq.

The USA today clarified that the Indian soldiers would not be deployed for combat operations and that they would operate under the Tricolour. "There is no pressure on India (from the USA) to send troops to Iraq... Should India decide against sending troops, it won't come in the way of the Indo-US relationship," US ambassador Mr Robert Blackwill said. In fact, a Pentagon delegation, led by assistant defence secretary Mr Peter Rodman, arrives in Delhi on Monday to clarify certain points raised by India.

Absence of support from the Congress would mean a no to the US request even if all objections are met satisfactorily, a BJP leader said. BJP's foreign affairs cell convener Mr Surendra Aurora said Delhi would like to know from the visiting US delegation if the Indian troops would need to report to a US commander and also what would be the exact nature of their job — policing or rehabilitation.

If the USA clarifies these points to India's satisfaction, the government would have to pass another resolution on Iraq before going for action, he said.

Earlier, the AICC had been focussing on Mrs Gandhi's letter which stated that "the Congress would be totally opposed to the deployment of troops under any arrangement other than a UN command". Today, the emphasis shifted to another sentence in the letter which talked of having no reservation if the troops were sent as part of "a multi-national peace keeping force that has the explicit mandate of the UN".

Sending troops will harm ties with Iraq: Farooq

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: India's relations with Iraq—one of its few Arab friends—would be strained if New Delhi agrees to Washington's request to send troops to the West Asian nation, warned Farooq Abdullah, the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister.

If the Iraqis launch a freedom struggle against the US, "will we be considered as friends or foes?" he asked at a function in the city on Thursday.

It should have been left to the

Iraqi people to decide whether they wanted to oppose Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, Mr Abdullah said. "It is easy to start a war, but difficult to end it," he added.

The success of the US-led war on terrorism, which started in Afghanistan, is debatable, Mr Abdullah said. "Have the Americans been able to bring democracy to Afghanistan?" he asked. "Have they been able to remove the warlords there?"

He pointed out that the US hadn't been hurt by terrorism like India has: Pakistan-sponsored ter-

rорism had created hatred between Muslims and Hindus in India, Mr Abdullah said. "We saw the effect in Gujarat," he added. Indian politicians had not helped matters by speaking in different voices about Kashmir, he said. "First we said we are not going to talk till terrorism ends, then what are we doing now?" he added.

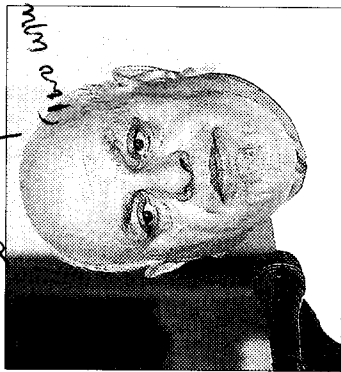
Though infiltration had not fallen, India was working to improve ties with Pakistan by setting up a bus service and an air connection, he said.

The only viable solution to the

Kashmir dispute is for Pakistan to understand that it cannot take India's territory and for India to understand that "we can't take theirs". "But how do we go about it?" Mr Abdullah asked. "Is the US going to use its influence on Pakistan?"

If the US could oust Mr Hussein, it could easily ensure that the terrorist camps in Pakistan are shut down, Mr Abdullah said.

"I would like to see the camps abolished and the ISI (Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence) wound up," he said.



Farooq Abdullah

Keep the boys home

Iraq is no place for Indian troops

Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani's US visit seems to have added some urgency to the question of sending Indian troops to US-occupied Iraq. Proof lies in the Prime Minister asking Sonia Gandhi to meet him on Sunday to discuss the issue. Atal Behari Vajpayee surely knows this is a politically charged issue and not taking the Congress's opinion beforehand can allow the Opposition a free hand post-decision. That is good politics. But even if Sonia somehow thinks that Indian soldiers should do duty in a country that was attacked against all canons of international law, the Prime Minister must think again. Two of his most important ministers, LK Advani and defence minister, George Fernandes, are reportedly against sending Indian soldiers. We agree. Arguments on their side far outnumber the weapons of mass destruction that the occupying powers are professing to see. In fact, the case against sending troops can be made without talking about the fatal lack of a UN presence. As senior officials have pondered if Indian troops do duty in Iraq, either India has to spend its own scarce resources to pay for men and materiel, or will, in effect, become hired guns for the US, if Americans foot the bill. Why should India, facing a huge fiscal deficit and lacking money for any number of development projects, spend to bring order to a country whose descent into chaos was brought about by fraud and violence condemned by the UN and its Security Council by Anglo-American aggression. On the other hand, if we are financially prudent and accept US money to pay for our soldiers, what message does that send around the world about our country's armed forces and indeed our nation? Linked to that is the issue that Indian troops in Iraq in the current situation will be under US command and report to US generals and civilian authorities. This would have been fine were India a part of what George Bush had brazenly and mistakenly called the coalition of the willing. Having been thoroughly unwilling and skeptical all along, how can we accept a situation where Indian officers and soldiers are sent to clean up, say, Baathist resistance on an US general's orders. That brings up the other issue — casualties. Soldiers and officers accept death and injury as part of their job — but dying in a foreign country for a cause that is illegal and staggeringly unpopular in India and which has no legitimate bearing on national interests is a different ball game. Ministers are reportedly apprehensive the Congress may use casualties as a political stick. They are, pardon the expression, dead right. Does the BJP need this? Party leaders should seriously petition government leaders on the issue.

The answer to the Americans therefore is — No — not unless the UN is given complete charge of the country, civil and military, including the right to review and cancel new oil contracts issued by America to its friends within the US and outside. It must include reconstruction costs to be paid for by the aggressors. Bush's bait to talk to Musharraf about terrorism in Kashmir is not even a credible bait. Temptation is meant to be resisted. Do not get into it.

A time to rebuild

Given our ties with Iraq, it makes sense to send a stabilisation force to that country

NEW DELHI undoubtedly faces a defining moment as it moves towards taking a final decision about whether or not to send a military-led stabilisation force to Iraq. It is extremely important that we make the right decision, and for the right reasons. It is obvious that we must not send a stabilisation force because some lucrative contracts may come our way. The very idea of risking the lives of our jawans for such a goal is humiliating, to say the least. Nor should we agree to sending forces in the hope that this would please Washington. India was unhappy with the way a unilateralist war was waged; and this was clearly conveyed by the parliamentary resolution. But the UN Security Council resolution 1483 after the war spells out the framework of its mandate clearly: It recognises the US as the "authority", and calls upon all countries to contribute to stabilising Iraq and providing humanitarian assistance.

It would be desirable to take a final decision on sending a stabilisation force to Iraq on the basis of bipartisan support. It can be argued that such a force would have an UN mandate even under the present resolution. But the issues go beyond such technicalities. The central concern is whether we should assist the people of Iraq at this hour of acute challenge or not? Our historical relationship with that country, our belief in our actions

as a responsible major power, the urgent need to help restore the dignity, peace and self-confidence of the Iraqis, besides a host of other reasons, demand that we send a stabilisation force to Iraq. What we need to ensure is adequate autonomy in carrying out our commitment, and precautions to minimise any negative fall-out from such an action.

Since there is no legitimate Iraqi government, what New Delhi needs to do urgently, before taking a final decision on the issue, is to send a multi-disciplinary task force to Iraq for an on-the-spot assessment of the situation. Such a group should talk to community leaders to discuss their reactions to our involvement, understand challenges and examine the options available to restore peace, security and stability to Iraqi society at the earliest. In any case, the stabilisation force would need their co-operation subsequently, especially if and when things start to foul up somewhere. More important, such a step would send a clear message that our primary concerns are the people of the country, the restoration of their rights and the rebuilding of their country, without bias toward any group or pre-judgment about the challenges they face. There will be problems and many difficult times ahead. But this should not deter us from discharging our responsibility in tune with the needs of the people of Iraq.

Discussions were not Pakistan-centric

No pressure to send troops to Iraq, says Advani

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JUNE 11. While the United States is keen on India's participation in the stabilisation process of Iraq, there is no pressure of any kind on India to send troops to Iraq and a final decision will be taken by the Government after factoring in what the Pentagon team — visiting India next week — has to say, according to the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani.

Addressing a press conference at the Indian Embassy on Tuesday at the end of his official visit to Washington, Mr. Advani said that unlike his last visit to the U.S., discussions were not Pakistan-centric this time round. "Last time, it was focussed almost entirely on the problem of terrorism and my visit certainly seemed to be Pakistan-centric. This time it is not so. Pakistan did figure in the talks, terrorism did figure in the talks, but not as much as last time," Mr. Advani said. His last visit to Washington was in January 2002 after the terrorist attack on Parliament House.

"I cannot say anything at this point of time and particularly so when the... (Pentagon) team is still to visit India and still to discuss the matter with the counterparts there." "... all aspects would be taken into account before a decision is taken," he said.

It would undoubtedly be a major political and diplomatic boost to the Bush administration if India agrees to send troops to Iraq as part of the stabilisation drive in that country. At the same time, New Delhi has raised specific issues including that of command and control and would prefer participation under the aegis of the United Nations.

The issue of Iraq was a major item on Mr. Advani's agenda of talks in the last three days here. With the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, this was



The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, with the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, Tom Ridge, in front of a display of the signatures of American Presidents after their meeting at the Homeland Security Department in Washington on Tuesday. — PTI

the principal issue on Sunday; and the President, George W. Bush, started off his meeting with Iraq the following day.

The Bush administration is "keen" on India's participation and the reasons were "understandable", Mr. Advani said adding that he did not see pressure "of any kind" and that New Delhi was "free to take a decision".

The highpoint of Mr. Advani's visit, clearly, was the meeting with Mr. Bush. Mr. Bush is said to have lauded the recent peace initiatives of the Prime Minister,

Atal Behari Vajpayee, and said that India could take an initiative "only when it is confident of its security" and that every nation had to look after its security.

In his prepared statement, Mr. Advani said that Mr. Bush had expressed warm admiration for Mr. Vajpayee's initiative of April 18 and that he deserved credit for it. Mr. Bush had assured Mr. Vajpayee in St. Petersburg that he would be speaking to Pakistan's President, Pervez Musharraf, "about creating a climate in which this

initiative could succeed.

Without getting into the specifics of his discussions either with various U.S. leaders, Mr. Advani said that his interactions had helped promote the objectives of covering the strategic nature of the bilateral relationship and the agenda for cooperation.

"The response I got convinced me that the American Government is earnestly endeavouring to recognise India as a major power. That kind of a relationship is being consciously built up," he said.

Mr. Bush's National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, had conveyed to him that further steps were being taken to ensure progress on all issues including the "trinity" — civilian space cooperation, nuclear energy and trade in high technology.

Mr. Advani was asked if the U.S. agreed that there could be no progress in relations between India and Pakistan unless cross-border terrorism stopped. "The American Government is conscious of all these facts but every government has its foreign policy interest to safeguard and those foreign policy interests may be based upon certain assessments with which India may not agree. That's a different matter," Mr. Advani said.

"But I give scope to every country even in its battle against terrorism to look after its own foreign policy interests. India would also like to do the same and, therefore, I have always held that cross-border terrorism so far as India is concerned is a problem which is essentially India's own," he said.

"And India is determined to overcome this problem on its own though we do feel that the international climate created against terrorism after September 11, 2001, has been of great help to us and it will continue to be of help to us," he said.

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Discussions were not Pakistan-centric

12 JUN 2003

THE HINDU

Iraq: Why we must stay away

India has nothing to gain by being a part of the US-led Coalition, says **TAUFIQ SUBHAN**

THE proposal to send Indian troops to Iraq has forced our policy makers to address issues pertaining to the recent war in Iraq, its impact on the region and our interests. It has also compelled us to understand, and come to terms with, the full implications of the emergence of the US as the world's sole superpower.

Both before and during the recent US-led armed assault on Iraq, the Indian leadership and public opinion had voiced opposition to this unilateral recourse to effect regime change in a sovereign country. Besides the Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister, the Indian Parliament had also issued a resolution criticising the war and calling on the Coalition Forces to withdraw speedily.

In order to obtain some legitimacy for its occupation of the country, the US pushed through UNSC Resolution 1483, which appealed to member states to assist the people of Iraq in their effort to reform their institutions, rebuild their country and contribute to conditions of stability and security in Iraq. The resolution recognised the US-led Coalition as the "authority" in the country.

According to reports, the US has appealed to a number of countries to provide troops for stabilisation duties in Iraq, supporting the US forces already in the country. The obvious US interest in expanding the "coalition of the willing" is to broaden global support for its actions in Iraq, soften its image as an occupying force and, by sending home some sections of its forces, reduce American casualties at the hands of hostile Iraqi nationalists.

The US attaches considerable importance to Indian participation in Iraq primarily because of our status (not always appreciated in India) as the leader and conscience-keeper of the developing world, as also the warm feelings that the average Iraqis have for India.

The discussion on this subject in India has so far focused on details such as chain of command issues, the role of the force in internecine conflicts and in national political development, the time-frame for our military presence and the emergence of a legitimate govern-

ment in the country. Not much light has been shed so far. The reason is obvious: the US is unwilling to provide information as it has no intention of sharing authority in Iraq with any other country or institution. The participation of other countries in stabilisation and nation-building activity will be limited to implementing US-made plans and programmes.

American policy makers, to their credit, have made no promises of political or economic benefit to India. They have just pointed out that alliance with the US in Iraq is a "strategic opportunity" which India should seize quickly lest it be totally frozen out of benefits in future. The short message is: get on board with us if you want to get anywhere; if you don't, you will go nowhere.

The US has no intention of sharing authority in Iraq. The participation of other countries will be limited to implementing US-made programmes... The short message is: get on board with us if you want to get anywhere; if you don't, you will go nowhere

At the risk of upsetting those anxious to clamber onto the gravy train, let me set out some areas of concern. The bait of economic opportunity is frankly the least significant. No multi-million dollar mega-projects are likely to come India's way; these will remain the monopoly of US corporations. The best India can hope for would be minor sub-contracts. The most likely scenario is that India will be tapped to provide skilled labour, technicians and middle-level professionals. This will occur irrespective of whether India participates in the US-led occupation or not.

Hence, our participation has to be evaluated in terms of our national interest. The questions we have to ask ourselves are: Will the US become more sensitive to our core security concern, i.e., cross-border terrorism? Will the US become more supportive of us on the

Kashmir issue? What will the US response be to India's nuclear status and our legitimate concerns pertaining to China?

The US, as the sole superpower, has its own priorities in regard to security concerns. It will not allow itself to be cornered by India on matters pertaining to Pakistan. Regardless of its posture with regard to the international war on terrorism and its concerns relating to Islam-based extremism, the US is likely to continue to see Pakistan as a valuable ally. As the situation in Afghanistan deteriorates, its dependence on Pakistan's local knowledge and intelligence will actually increase.

Similarly, the US is not likely to give up its 55-year-old position on Kashmir, in terms of which it rejects the legality of the accession of Jammu and Kash-

mir to India and believes the entire territory of the State to be "disputed". It has maintained this position primarily as a "card" to keep Indian regional aspirations in check and to maintain a pressure-point vis-à-vis Indian positions on contentious regional issues. Recall the threat made in the mid-1990s to internationalise the Kashmir issue if we did not go along with the Americans and recognise the Taliban, necessary at that time to further UNOCAL's pipeline interests. The US is hardly likely to give up this card, which has long-term strategic implications, merely to reward India for participating in the occupation of Iraq.

We have to be similarly sceptical about US sensitivity to our nuclear status and our security concerns relating to China. Not too many years ago, a US President visiting Beijing spoke of China's legitimate interests in the security of South Asia. And, the present ideology-driven US administration is already developing doctrines to halt the proliferation of WMDs — this is presently confined to "rogue" states, a flexible definition that swings with the doctrinaire officials prevailing in Washington.

India's military participation in Iraq has also been recommended in light of India's traditional political and economic ties with Iraq, which have left a legacy of deep affection for India in the hearts of most Iraqis. This legacy is very likely to vapourise with India's occupation of Iraq as an ally of the US. Iraqis recall the participation of Indian soldiers against Iraqi nationalists in the First and Second World Wars. They forgave those bloody encounters as they saw the Indian soldiers as fellow

victims of British imperialism. They will not readily forgive a new occupation by us with the new imperialists. Today, what Iraq needs most from its friends is support to enable it to put in place a political order that is independent, credible, effective, and can lay the basis for the emergence of a legitimate and popular government. This is hardly part of the US agenda, whatever its officials may say.

There are reports that Indian troops deployed in Iraq will be located in the Kurdish territories, presumably taking into account the Kurds' respect for India and love for leaders like Gandhiji and Nehru. Given the traditional internecine conflicts of the Kurds, this would be a political and military quagmire from which our soldiers will not emerge with glory. How will the Indian troops cope with the Kurds' aspirations for autonomy or even national sover-

eignty, both of which are intensely disliked by Turkey? Will Indian troops confront the Kurdish peshmergas as they march to Kirkuk or Mosul? What will be their response if Turkish forces invade Kurdistan? We have also to assess what impact our military role in Iraq will have on our interests in the Middle East region. India has very substantial stakes there: we obtain two-thirds of our crude oil supplies from the region, which employs 35 lakh Indians who send \$ 7000 million as annual remittances to India. Following 9/11 and the war in Iraq, the Middle East is in a state of confusion as regimes feel alienated from their populations. These regimes fear that US insensitivity and obduracy, as it pursues aggressive designs while condoning Israeli violence against the Arabs, will push even greater numbers of their restive population into the arms of extremists, exacerbating acts of terror, regional tensions and deeper alienation between the US and the Arab/Muslim populations of the Middle East. In this situation, the region can be expected to react most negatively to an Indian military presence in Iraq. Is it in India's interest to alienate a region with which it has substantial, mutually beneficial ties and where it enjoys enormous respect for its independent approach to international issues?

The US today presents an ugly face: it unilaterally unleashed a war of revenge on Iraq, even fabricating intelligence data to justify the assault. It speaks the language of reform but pursues policies of self-interest, hegemony and aggressiveness. The present is a time of uncertainty, uneasiness and ferment. US thinking has yet to reflect the moderation and constructive approach required of it as the world's sole superpower. This is hardly the time for India to make foreign policy decisions that depart so fundamentally from its traditional values and principles.

Over time, as the responsibility of power befalls American thinking, our ties with the US will mature, developing on the basis of mutual respect and understanding of each others' core concerns. For the present, the most pragmatic policy we can follow is to be principled.



US troops in Baghdad. AP/PTI

THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 2003

119-10
12/6
TREADING WITH CAUTION

INDIA'S EXCELLENT TRACK record as one of the leading partners in the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations over the past half a century should ensure that one more engagement of a similar nature does not raise any controversy or opposition. But the American request that India contribute soldiers for the stabilisation force Washington is putting together in Iraq under its occupation falls under a totally new category and calls for precedent-setting decisions, demanding utmost caution and dispassionate consideration of all pros and cons. Considering that there are still many unanswered questions about the American-led war on Saddam Hussein and his Iraq and many imponderables about an as yet undefined stabilisation assignment, a decision on the U.S. request must follow a clear national political consensus. That the Government is aware of the need for evolving a consensus is evident from the fact that it has deferred a decision despite two meetings of the Cabinet Committee on Security. The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, struck the right note when he said in reply to questions in Washington after a series of meetings with American leaders that New Delhi would not be hurried into a decision. An American team of experts is coming to Delhi to respond to the queries that have apparently been raised by Government interlocutors.

Transparency in decision-making is essential on a contentious issue of this nature since the country is entering uncharted territory. There are genuine apprehensions that Indian participation may lend legitimacy to the U.S.-led invasion of a sovereign nation, launched in violation of international law and without sanction from the international community as represented by the U.N. But these fears may at this late stage be deemed irrelevant, in particular following the May 22 Security Council resolution that tacitly endorsed American control over the occupied land while simultaneously providing for a marginally enlarged role for the United Nations. The 14-0 vote on

the resolution effectively closed the debate on whether the U.S.-led war was legitimate or not. The entry of U.N. organisations, even if at the present stage only on humanitarian relief work, may perhaps facilitate the participation of member-nations such as India which had opposed the war. Objections have also been raised about the fact that while in U.N.-sponsored operations Indian soldiers have served under commanders of different nationalities but under the U.N. flag, they will for the first time come under American command and control if allowed to be deployed in Iraq. These are valid objections and relevant in the extraordinary instance of Iraq, where the stabilisation force can come face to face with unpredictable and unpalatable situations. Indian soldiers should not be committed without full clarity and understanding on command and control and their specific duties. The bitter feuding in Sierra Leone nearly three years ago should serve as a warning, too.

As Washington steps up pressure on New Delhi to fall in line and perhaps assist with its democracy-building effort in Iraq, among the other imponderables that face India are the type of signal that Indian troops serving in Iraq under U.S. command can send to the Arab world and the evolving lessons held out by a similar (but U.N. supported) effort in Afghanistan. With the leading members and supporters of the former regimes not totally defeated, peacekeepers are targets of attack in both countries. German soldiers returning home after a stint in Afghanistan fell victim to an apparent terror attack last week outside Kabul. In Iraq, American and British peacekeepers are everyday facing the hazards of occupation. In the absence of a properly structured programme, the U.N. has also had its share of tragedies when it tried to bring about peace to end internal conflicts, such as in the Horn of Africa. If these pitfalls are to be averted, New Delhi should give the nod to sending a peacekeeping force to Iraq only after concerns of safety and the political implications are assessed.

WE FIND

12 JUN 2003

Atal-Sonia talks on Iraq soon

HT Correspondent of
New Delhi, June 10

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee has invited Sonia Gandhi on Sunday for consultations on India's role in Iraq, including the controversial issue of sending Indian troops for stabilisation duties in that country.

The interaction between the two leaders would come on the eve of the arrival of a Pentagon team next week to provide any "clarification" India may want on the exact role of the proposed peace force in Iraq.

However, the main Opposition party is totally opposed to any deployment of Indian troops unless it is un-



Atal Bihari Vajpayee

der the UN command or part of a multi-national peacekeeping force that has the explicit mandate of the UN.

In fact, Sonia had written to Vajpayee on June 4 to convey her party's objections

to any move which violated "this fundamental principle". She also wanted him to clarify the government's "exact position" on the question of dispatching Indian forces to Iraq.

The bottomline is, as senior Congress leader Natwar Singh put it: "Who will the troops report to and where will they be deployed? Will they salute the UN flag or the US-DK flags?" He also pointed out that countries like China or Russia were not sending their troops.

Given this, the Centre may find it difficult to take a stand on the matter without taking into account the views of the leading Opposition party. It is also bound by



Sonia Gandhi

the Parliamentary resolution — adopted in April — which deplored the war in Iraq and urged the international community to put pressure on the US-led coalition to immediately halt hos-

tilities and withdraw from the state.

Besides this, the Centre too may have its own queries on the question of sending troops when the US team arrives here next week. On Tuesday, Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani had reportedly told George W. Bush in Washington that the Indian Cabinet Committee on Security — which discussed the matter twice — wanted a clarification on certain issues before finalising its stand on the US's proposal for an Indian contribution to the stabilisation force. This included issues like the need for such a force, its roadmap and the command under which it would work.

'US concerned over S Asia, but will not interfere'

Press Trust of India

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BERLIN, May 28. — Replying to a question from the German daily Der Spiegel in the course of a wide-ranging interview as to what role the USA had to play when India has so far rejected any mediation from outside, the Prime Minister said in the age of globalisation and the increasingly closer world it is a matter of course that the international community was concerned about tensions between India and Pakistan.

"We (India and USA) are partners in an international coalition against terrorism and have to support each other to fight it everywhere. For this reason the USA plays a role in this conflict, and we encourage it to do it effectively. "In all matters concerning exclusively India and Pakistan, USA does not play a role. I think Washington has understood and accepted this," he said.

Asked about Islamabad's suggestion that both countries entirely give up their nuclear arsenals, he said disarming "our nuclear arsenals" would affect a much larger region and not only be limited to India, Pakistan or even South Asia: "It (the nuclear issue) cannot be negotiated bilaterally for this reason. Do not forget that renunciation of first-strike is part of our nuclear doctrine."

To a question whether the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which the USA waged in its fight against terrorism, changed India's perception as well, Mr Vajpayee said the events of 9/11 gave evidence that terrorism could strike everywhere. "Democratic societies, which are the target of this terror, need therefore to concentrate their efforts."

Vajpayee prepared to 'negotiate' with Musharraf

Observing that the resolution of the Kashmir problem would require "serious compromises", Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee has said he is prepared to negotiate with Gen. Musharraf, reports PTI.

"I am prepared to negotiate with him,"

J. & P. in

Mr Vajpayee told Der Spiegel when asked if he considered the general "trustworthy". Welcoming the restriction imposed by Pakistan on the Hizbul Mujahideen, Mr Vajpayee said, "other steps will have to follow". "If this has real consequences, I can only welcome this step."

Asked if he was concentrating in achieving improvement with Pakistan in trade, transport and cultural exchange, Mr Vajpayee said after years of tensions and mutual distrust the views about the other have hardened. "The solution of the J&K problem will, however, demand serious compromises ... for that we have to build confidence first. This includes economic co-operation.... If Indians and Pakistanis understand that living together peacefully brings advantages, they will be much more willing than today to find creative solutions for the central problem."

No mediation in J&K: Blackwill

Strongly supporting India's move to extend a hand of friendship to Pakistan, the USA today categorically ruled out any mediation on J&K. Outgoing US ambassador to India Mr Robert D Blackwill told a press meet here that "the Bush Administration, despite constant media speculation to the contrary, will not attempt to mediate on Kashmir." "There will be no American roadmaps... no American gameplan... no substantive proposals," Mr Blackwill said referring to Indo-Pak ties, and emphasised that their differences must be resolved bilaterally, adds PTI from Mumbai.

Advani likely to call on Bush

Mr LK Advani is likely to call on US President Mr George Bush during his state visit to America. On his way back, via London, he will meet Mr Tony Blair.

Mr Advani will hold talks, ranging from J&K, terrorism, the security situation in South Asia and also Iraq peacekeeping, with Vice-President Mr Dick Cheney. Mr Advani leaves on June 7 and is likely to be back on June 16. He will also meet Gen. Powell, reports SNS from New Delhi.

THE STATESMAN

29 MAY 2003

CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM WILL BE TAKEN UP WITH MUSHARRAF'

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Bush, Advani discuss issue of troops for Iraq

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JUNE 10. Issues of cross-border terrorism and the possibility of sending Indian troops to Iraq as part of a peace-keeping-cum-stabilisation operation were high on the agenda of the discussion between the United States President, George W. Bush, and the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, at the White House on Monday.

Mr. Advani had gone to the White House for a meeting with the National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, when Mr. Bush very soon dropped by.

The meeting between Mr. Advani and Mr. Bush lasted about 30 minutes, officials and diplomats said.

Mr. Bush is said to have raised at the outset the possibility of India sending troops to Iraq for peace-keeping operations and Mr. Advani replied that the Cabinet Committee on Security had discussed the issue twice and still needed some clarifications. Mr. Bush then responded that a team of experts from the Pentagon would be visiting India next Monday to provide all clarifications.

The U.S. is keen on India's participation in the peace-keeping and stabilisation process in Iraq and had indicated last month its desire to have a fairly large contingent of Indian troops in that country. (New Delhi has raised some pointed questions on the exact role for its troops. Questions on the duration of the troops in Iraq and the command structure have also been raised.)

The issue also came up on Sunday during the meeting between Mr. Advani and the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, and the broad indication given by Mr. Advani is that aside from addressing specific concerns there would have to be a political consensus of sorts back home.



The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, with the U.S. President, George Bush and the U.S. National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice (second from left), at the White House in Washington on Monday. — PTI

Cross-border terrorism was one of the major issues discussed at the White House meeting, with Mr. Advani apparently telling Mr. Bush that incidents of terror had not gone down. Mr. Bush assured Mr. Advani that he would be taking up this specific subject when he meets the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, at Camp David on June 24.

Mr. Advani is said to have stressed that bilateral relations have to be kept in perspective.

Later, Mr. Advani said that Mr. Bush had greatly appreciated the initiatives taken by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and noted that this kind of initiative could be taken only if India was confident about its security.

Mr. Bush agreed that "every country has to look after its security". Mr. Bush was particularly appreciative of Mr.

Vajpayee's speech in Srinagar that "gave political space to our neighbour".

Mr. Advani said that India hoped Pakistan would respond positively to this initiative and that this would yield results.

In his meeting with Mr. Bush and Dr. Rice, Mr. Advani is said to have made the point that India was happy with the evolving relationship with the U.S. in a number of areas including defence cooperation.

Reflecting on his talks with senior members of the administration and on the nature and scope of bilateral relations, he stressed that Indo-U.S. relations were now on a different level altogether and that these were not tied to any specific issue.

"It is not an alliance of convenience. It is a principled relationship between the world's biggest democracies, the largest and the strongest. It is proceed-

ing very satisfactorily," Mr. Advani said.

On Tuesday, the final day of his visit, Mr. Advani had a meeting with the Vice-President, Dick Cheney, at the White House. He later left for the Department of Homeland Security for a session with the newly-appointed Secretary, Tom Ridge.

Mr. Advani is here on an official visit at the invitation of the Vice-President who by all accounts is a known hawk within the Bush administration with strong views on terrorism.

Details of the meeting between Mr. Advani and Mr. Cheney were not immediately available and could be shared by the Deputy Prime Minister at a news conference scheduled for later this afternoon at the Embassy of India. Mr. Advani leaves Washington for Chicago and Los Angeles later today.

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THE HINDU

A double-faced stand: CPI(M)

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 10. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has strongly opposed the move to send Indian troops to Iraq and charged that the Vajpayee Government's willingness to consider such a request indicated the "double-faced stand" the Centre had taken throughout the war in Iraq.

The party's viewpoint was articulated by the Central Committee at its three-day meeting which concluded in Kolkata on Monday. The stand came around the time the U.S. administration has broached the issue with the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, who is on a visit to the U.S.

The CPI (M) said the U.N. Security Council resolution had recognised the U.S. as the occupying authority. The world body had not sanctioned a U.N. peacekeeping force and if Indian troops were sent, they would have to serve under the American military command.

"Having been forced by the public opinion to adopt a resolution in Parliament, deploring the war, the Government cannot flagrantly violate the wishes of Parliament and the people to further the interests of the U.S. in Iraq", the Committee said.

It also noted that the U.S. had stepped up its aggressive policies for global hegemony, and sug-

gested that India should adopt such policies that would help to curb the unilateral steps taken by the former. "This requires an independent foreign policy and not the pro-U.S. policy adopted by the BJP."

While welcoming the move for resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan following the Prime Minister's initiative, the party cautioned that sufficient grounds should be prepared to finalise the agenda for the talks.

'Cong. a better choice'

Malabika Bhattacharya reports from Kolkata:

The CPI (M) general secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, said on Monday that the party preferred the Congress to the BJP as "the former is not a direct threat to the nation."

Briefing presspersons after the party's three-day central committee meeting, he said, "there is a difference between the BJP and the Congress. The latter does not threaten to destroy the nation while the former does." Mr. Surjeet said the CPI (M) still hoped that a third front would be formed in the future. He, however, admitted that efforts to form such a front had failed over the years. "We realise that the third front will not materialise in a day. But, we also know that we will have to strive for it because this is the only alternative to the bourgeois and the communal parties."

THE HINDU

11 JUN 2003

U.S. REQUEST / SONIA TO TAKE UP ISSUE WITH PM

U.S. REQUEST / SONIA TO TAKE UP ISSUE WITH PM
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Cong. opposes troops for Iraq

By K.K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, JUNE 10. The Congress has strong reservations to the despatch of Indian troops to Iraq in terms of the U.S. request — which are certain to figure in the party president, Sonia Gandhi's meeting with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, on Sunday.

Ms. Gandhi has already conveyed her objections to the U.S. proposal in a letter to Mr. Vajpayee. Washington, as is known, wants the Indian troops to form part of a "stabilisation force".

The Congress is opposed to any such arrangement, saying that Indian troops have always taken part in peacekeeping operations in the past in various countries only under the United Nation auspices. Any departure from that practice is considered

objectionable.

The Government is yet to make up its mind. As the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, told the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, in Washington, the issue will be decided after taking all aspects into account.

A group of senior U.S. officials is due to come here early next week for discussions on the subject. Apart from meeting Ms. Gandhi, Mr. Vajpayee may sound other party leaders as well.

On the face of it, the U.S. proposal is ambiguous in many respects and, as such, the Government will be seeking answers to some of the material questions.

Will the Indian troops be under the U.S. command? Will they be there for enforcing law and order or for handling possible po-

litical revolts? Will India be associated with the political process, to be designed for Iraq's future? How long will the forces stay there?

Then there is the problem posed by the parliamentary resolution on Iraq, which called for the withdrawal of the U.S. troops. The U.S. side may stretch the wording of the latest Security Council resolution to provide for a fig leaf of U.N. connection to the operation of troops from India and some other countries.

During the last Gulf war, the Congress, which was, in the Opposition then also, took a firm stand against the Chandra Shekhar Government's decision — to provide refuelling facilities to U.S. military aircraft.

Rajiv Gandhi, then Congress president, spearheaded the campaign against the official policy.

DOMINION

11 JUN 2003

India to soon decide on troops to Iraq

Advani to update US on terrorism

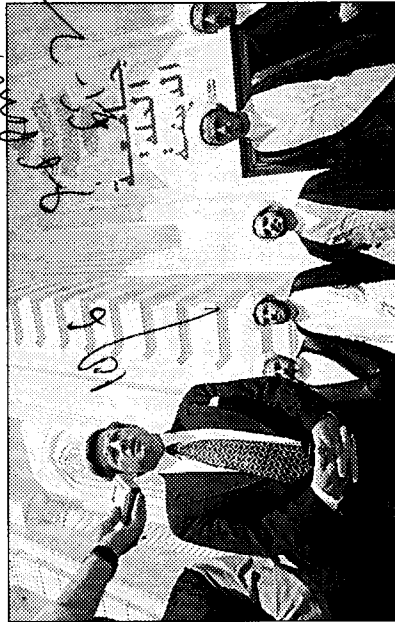
Vasantha Arora
WASHINGTON 9 JUNE

DEPUTY prime minister L.K. Advani has assured the US that India would decide on deploying troops in Iraq as part of a stabilisation force after "taking into consideration all aspects of the issue."

Mr Advani gave the assurance when US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld raised the issue at an unscheduled meeting on Sunday at the Willard Hotel, where Mr Advani is staying after arriving here as part of a 10-day visit to the US and UK.

An embassy spokesman said Mr Advani and Mr Rumsfeld also discussed bilateral issues and expressed satisfaction at the "pace and progress" of the growing defence cooperation between India and the US. The next meeting of the defence policy group of the two countries will be held here on August 6 and 7. Mr Rumsfeld, who will be out of town from Monday, called on Mr Advani at his hotel in what was described as "a very special gesture."

The deputy prime minister made it a point to convey his "great appreciation" of Mr Rumsfeld's gesture, which, according to diplomatic sources, is not quite the norm but an exception. As expected, the possible deployment of troops in Iraq moved to the top of the agenda of Mr Ad-



SEARCH FOR ORDER: US civil administrator for Iraq Paul Bremer comes out from a meeting with leaders of the Islamic University in Hilla on Sunday. — AFP

vani's visit within minutes of his arrival from New York by train to the US capital.

The US, which is facing growing difficulties in replacing its troops in war-ravaged Iraq, made a formal request to New Delhi in early May for the deployment of its forces. But India has not yet decided on the US request. There are reports that the Vajpayee government favours a UN mandate for such a deployment.

(Strong objections have been voiced, especially by the Opposition parties, including the Congress, on sending troops to Iraq as a stabilisation force. After his meeting with Donald Rumsfeld, Mr Advani went to a temple in

Vasantha Arora
WASHINGTON 9 JUNE

The deputy prime minister L.K. Advani said he would brief the Bush administration on the unabated terrorist threat in Jammu and Kashmir and vowed to defeat what he called the "proxy war" launched by Pakistan.

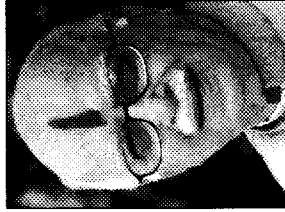
The deputy prime minister was speaking at a reception hosted in his honour on Sunday night by Indian ambassador Lalit Mansingh at the Omni Shoreham hotel, hours before his discussions on Monday with President George W. Bush's national security advisor Condoleezza Rice and other senior officials.

Without naming Pakistan, Mr Advani said he would apprise his interlocutors of the role of "our neighbour" in aiding and abetting terrorism in Kashmir. Avoiding any direct comment on the US policy on Pakistan, he said:

"India's view is that no civilised society or a democratic society would support or provide aid to such countries which, directly or indirectly, sponsor terrorism."

Mr Advani said he visited the US last year immediately after the attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001 and met President Bush and other US leaders. Then, President Bush had voiced strongest possible terms at the New Delhi attack. Mr Advani said he would remind the US leaders of Bush's observations at that time and leave it to them to decide their stand, apparently, vis-a-vis Pakistan.

He said India has faced three wars over Kashmir and every time the aggressor was defeated. "We have no doubt that it (Pakistan) will fail in its proxy war as well," Mr Advani said national security, though extremely important, was not the only concern of his government. — IANS



Advani buys time on US request for troops to Iraq

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Washington: India has sought some more time to decide on committing its troops for a stabilisation force in Iraq amidst intense pressure from the United States, some of which came to the fore in talks on Sunday between Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

The US Defence Secretary made the unusual move of calling on Mr Advani at his suite at Willard Hotel in downtown Washington on a Sunday afternoon, soon after the DPM had arrived by train from

New York. The Indians, who Americans believe are excessively protocol-conscious and are easily slighted or flattered, were expectedly delighted and issued a press release saying Mr Advani appreciated the special gesture.

Aside from the fact that Mr Rumsfeld is expected to be out of Washington over the next two days when Mr Advani meets other top US officials, the Sunday sortie appeared to involve the issue of Indian troops to Iraq.

The US Defence Secretary, accompanied by two of his aides, broached the subject straight of

the bat. Evidently, the US military is now caught on a sticky wicket in Iraq and needs some kind of release and India is seen to fit the bill for strategic and logistical reasons.

But Mr Advani told Mr Rumsfeld that the issue had to be decided by India's Cabinet Committee on Security Affairs after determining the extent of consensus in the political system, sources said. In other words, more time. There was also the issue of command and control and how long the commitment was for and to what purpose.

Some of these issues are already being discussed by the Indian mil-

itary and the US Central Command, sources added. Mr Advani also raised the issue of Pakistan's relentless cross-border terrorism, referring to the most recent massacre of four Hindus in Kashmir.

He also told Mr Rumsfeld that Islamabad could have chosen to prove its credentials against terrorism by transferring from their sanctuaries in Pakistan some of the 20 most wanted criminals and terrorists India had sought, but it had chosen not to do so.

Under the circumstances, he added, it was difficult for India to believe that Pakistan could be an ally in the war against terrorism.

Parties for immediate release of Suu Kyi

By Amit Baruah

g-f parties

NEW DELHI, JUNE 6. Political parties have expressed concern at the May 30 "attack" on the Myanmar leader and National League for Democracy general secretary, Aung San Suu Kyi, and called for her immediate release.

The Samata Party, a partner in the National Democratic Alliance Government, called for the immediate release of Ms. Suu Kyi and others languishing in jails for their commitment to democracy. The party spokesman, Shiv Kumar, said in a statement: "The physical attack on Aung San Suu Kyi and the injury on her head, and the killing of several political workers by the military firing are brutal acts which the world needs to take note of."

"The party urges the Government of India to use its influence to persuade the Myanmar military junta to end military rule and hand over power to the

The union

people of Myanmar," he added.

Anand Sharma of the Congress said that his party was concerned about the whereabouts of Ms. Suu Kyi. "She is not only a fighter for democracy but also a recipient of the Jawaharlal Nehru Award... we urge the authorities in Myanmar to ensure that no harm is done to her person."

In separate statements, the CPI central secretariat and the CPI (M) politburo demanded the immediate release of Ms. Suu Kyi. Strongly condemning the Myanmar junta for assaulting and detaining her and hundreds of NLD activists, the statement said: "The way she was attacked and arrested proves once again that the present regime is in no way prepared to allow Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi to meet the people and is determined to crush any movement for restoration of democracy".

Urging the Myanmar Government to release Ms. Suu Kyi and other arrested

g-f parties

leaders, the CPI (M) called for a dialogue to "ensure conditions" for democratic political activities.

"This step by the Myanmar Government is a setback to the process of restoring democratic rights, which was initiated with the release of Ms. Suu Kyi from house arrest last year," the CPI (M) added.

In another response, Janeswar Misra (Samajwadi Party) said they were "saddened and shocked" by the May 30 attack on Ms. Suu Kyi's convoy by supporters of the military regime. "I would like to request the Government of Myanmar that it should not try to suppress the movement (for democracy) by violent means. It should engage in peaceful dialogue..." Mr. Misra said.

"Our party urges the Government of Myanmar to immediately free Aung San Suu Kyi and allow reopening of NLD offices," the Samajwadi Party vice-president added.

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THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 2003

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ON THE GLOBAL STAGE
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APART FROM EXPERIENCING first hand the disconcerting and even debilitating chill that has hit international relations in the wake of the war against Iraq, the Prime Minister was perhaps not expecting very much from his rather gruelling, weeklong three-nation tour. Without doubt, Mr. Vajpayee's presence at the St. Petersburg celebrations and the expanded Group of 8 summit meetings at Evian, France, both on invitation, marked in some ways the coming of age for India on the global stage in the post-Cold War era. Against this distinct gain from the recognition of the voice of this country must be weighed the manner in which the bilateral issue of Kashmir was sought to be raised at every conceivable opportunity. Mr. Vajpayee's comments on the Kashmir issue on arrival in Delhi as well as the claims of Government spokesmen after his exchange of pleasantries across the banquet table with the American President, George W. Bush, in St. Petersburg shows that the Government has not yet got over the pre-occupation with ties with Pakistan. The meaningless claim of results flowing from that brief interlude contrasts sharply with the step by cautious step approach being adopted by both sides to move the bilateral relations forward.

The Prime Minister's first stop, in Berlin, was in the nature of fulfilling a long-delayed return visit. His review of bilateral and international issues with the German Chancellor and peace activist, Gerhard Schroeder, did produce the promise of a second look aimed at liberalising visa and residence regulations for Indian information technology professionals to live and work in Germany. The German green card scheme, introduced to lure IT technicians, has failed to yield the expected results mainly because of restrictive regulations. Of German investments in India, the high expectations

roused by the high profile visit of Mr. Schroeder more than a year and a half ago have remained unfulfilled. At Evian, on the third and last leg of his tour, Mr. Vajpayee returned to developmental issues. Here again, it is hard to share his optimism that a new world forum is emerging that will bring together the developing and developed world. The reality is that the message from Evian holds no particular cheer for the developing and poor nations in the prevailing atmosphere of mutual hostility within the Group of 8. The Franco-American obsession with upstaging each other has left the world distinctly poorer.

The Evian summit was a partial setback after the successful easing of tensions witnessed earlier at St. Petersburg. The summitry and celebration came in the backdrop of the Iraq war and the continuing American and British scramble for a credible rationale for their action, which had raised fundamental questions about the evolving global order. The gathering at the imperial capital, bringing together allies, former and aspiring allies and former foes, served to take some of the bitterness and heat off the strained global relations, sparking hopes that diplomacy may get back to centre stage after the trauma of Iraq and summitry, devalued in the wake of the Cold War's end, regaining its importance. The spirit of St. Petersburg, at 300 years old Europe's youngest city which set the tone of 20th century's ideological debate through a cataclysmic revolution, might hopefully have set the direction of international relations in the next few decades. Against their unilateralism, the policy makers in Washington were provided a different worldview from the Czarist capital, the focus trained on the distinct advantages of an inter-dependent, multipolar world. The promise proved shortlived.

0 11 2003

5 JUN 2003

A toast with Evian

The PM's demand for a more open trading regime at the G8 summit needs serious consideration

THE Indian response to an invitation from French President Jacques Chirac to travel to the Group of Eight (G8) summit at Evian, France, and interact with G8 leaders was balanced and sober. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee deserves approbation for not getting carried away and repeatedly insisting that he was there representing a developing country. This is a very Chinese way of dealing with such situations. Despite China's impressive economic performance, the Chinese leadership always insists that it is a developing country. We Indians tend to get carried away and often claim more greatness for ourselves than is warranted by our current global standing.

Hence, it was refreshing that the prime minister didn't go to Evian as a pretender major power but deliberately emphasised our relative status and our role as a voice of the developing world. The emphasis in his speech on issues of common concern for the developing world would have been welcomed by other leaders from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Vajpayee's forthright demand for a more open trading regime in which developed countries reduce domestic subsidies and non-tariff barriers and are more open to exports from developing country should have helped his hosts, the French government, understand the long distance they and the European Union have to travel to accommodate the economic interests of the developing world before they can hope to get them on board their project to build a multipolar world. If France and Germany truly want a

multipolar world they must pursue economic policies that strengthen the developing world, not weaken it.

Vajpayee had two suggestions aimed at generating the resources required for development. First, the introduction of market-based user charges for the extraction of natural resources by multinational companies; and, second, the Tobin Tax on international capital flows, originally proposed by Nobel Prize-winning economist James Tobin. While the latter has lots of problems and cannot work unless every single country in the world is willing to be a party to it, the former is an eminently sensible idea. Interestingly, Vajpayee's speech makes no reference to India. It would seem the prime minister saw himself representing a larger constituency of the world's poor at the Evian Summit and not just his own people. His suggestion that the Evian format of a wider consultation between the developed and developing countries was a welcome innovation. Created over a quarter century ago, in the midst of a financial and energy crisis in the developed economies and against the background of intense business rivalry between Japan and the West, the G8 has little relevance today. A group without China, Brazil, South Africa and India and one including Canada and Italy appears lopsided in its composition. Hence, while Evian was still a meeting of the G8 with some others, next time round these summits should be between the largest industrial and industrialising nations, a G-16 if you like. Few global crises can today be dealt with successfully by just the G8 alone.

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PAK MUST END VIOLENCE BEFORE TALKS, PM TELLS P-5

Five 'friends' in terror fight

Press Trust of India

LAUSANNE (Switzerland), June 2. — Leaders of the P-5 group of nations have supported India's stand that cross-border terrorism should end before a dialogue and promised to make efforts to achieve this end, significantly endorsing New Delhi's latest peace initiative.

At a press conference marking the conclusion of his week-long three-nation tour, Prime Minister Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee today said the leaders he met over the past few days feel that the violence that goes on across the LOC should end. "There is global support (for India's position)... we will make our efforts to see that cross-border violence ends," Mr Vajpayee said, adding that even Chinese President Mr Hu Jintao, whom he met in St. Petersburg, appreciated India's initiative.

Asked if the US President, Mr George Bush, gave an assurance that he would pressure Gen. Pervez Musharraf when the latter meets him in Washington this month, the

Prime Minister said "it is difficult to express it in words".

Mr Bush, the Prime Minister said, wanted to know whether India has started a dialogue with Pakistan. "I told him preliminary discussions have begun. The real and substantive will take time. For that cross-border terror should

end and steps have to be taken to destroy the infrastructure that supports violence".

Mr Bush, he said, replied, "Yes, I know. It is necessary that it (ends). And I will tell him (Musharraf) that. He did not say I will put pressure." Asked what he felt about this and whether the US would indeed pressure Islamabad, he said, "let's see".

The Prime Minister said there was a consensus among the leaders on terrorism, and they were also aware that tensions between India and Pakistan have now dissipated in the context of fears about their nuclear capabilities.

Asked why India was invited to the Evian summit, he said it was neither because of India's economic strength nor nuclear capability but because of the "overall global position" the country enjoyed. "They thought India should be taken along."

Referring to his talks with the Chinese President, Mr Vajpayee said they had "very good" discussions "the border issue also figured, he said.

Another report & photograph on page 2

Kasuri spouts peace, Rangers spew fire

LONDON/ JAMMU, June 2.

— Pakistan foreign minister Mr KM Kasuri told BBC last night that his country has "never said there should be cross-border terrorism... (in fact) we are trying to stop it."

Even as he said this Pakistani rangers fired on Indian border outposts at Nikowal in RS Pura sector, at Alfa Machal in Akhnoor sector and at Phadpur in Samba sector last night along the border in Jammu in an attempt to disrupt fencing work, BSF sources said in Jammu.

Mr Kasuri said even the USA could not seal its Mexican border. "If some people go endangering their own lives and if the Indian Army ... present in lakhs ... cannot stop them, then which Allah's lamp do we have that we rub and stop all this? ... Come let us try together so that we are able to give hope to Kashmiris and there is peace ... PTI

Water, water everywhere...

LAUSANNE, June 2. — "How many of us know that Mr Bush does not take liquor?" the Prime Minister asked here today.

Mr Vajpayee said when the toast was raised at the St. Petersburg dinner he was surprised to see the US President's glass filled with water. "Don't you drink?" Mr Vajpayee asked Mr Bush, seated next to him. "Bush told me that he gave up liquor 16 years ago." Mr Vajpayee asked him, what he was drinking. "Water," came the reply.

The Prime Minister was, however, cagey when asked what he himself had. He paused for a moment, flashed a smile, and asked: "Is it important to reveal this?" As journalists burst out laughing, he added: "The common man, drinks only water." But the Prime Minister did not specify whether he counted himself as one. — IANS

Cong. backs PM's initiative

^{q.f. PM} ^{2/6} ¹⁰⁻¹
BARAMULLA, JUNE 1 The Congress has pledged full support to the Vajpayee Government on its fresh peace initiative with Pakistan to usher in peace in strife-torn Jammu and Kashmir. "I hope that the new beginning (the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's peace initiative with Pakistan) will be successful. Congress welcomes this initiative and assures the Centre of its support," the party president, Sonia Gandhi, said at a public rally here today.

She lauded the State's people for braving the militants' bullets and announced that all 15 Congress-ruled States would give reservation in their medical, engineering and other technical institutions to militancy-hit Kashmiris. "The youngsters of this State need employment and training. All our 15 Chief Ministers have agreed to provide reservation to the affected people of Jammu and Kashmir." They had also agreed to promote tourism in the State to improve the financial health of the people. Listing the steps taken at the conclave of party Chief Ministers that ended here yesterday, Ms. Gandhi said the Congress had entered into a coalition with the PDP not for power but for a durable peace.

Ms. Gandhi distributed letters of appointment in government jobs to militancy-affected victims of Baramulla district. — PTI

Another report on Page 11

Sonia backs PM on peace initiatives

Stateman News Service

BARAMULLAH, June 1. — Mrs Sonia Gandhi today extended full support to the Centre in talks with Pakistan. She said the Kashmir dispute could only be resolved by a dialogue process, not by military might. The Congress chief was addressing a public rally here.

Mrs Sonia Gandhi welcomed the the peace initiatives taken by Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee to normalise India-Pakistan relations and expressed hopes that both counties would usher in a new beginning of good will. "Our stand has been consistent and clear... All issues can be resolved by talks... We have been saying this earlier and we again reiterate it," she said.

The Congress chief said the Centre should talk to the Kashmiris and try to solve their problems sympathetically. The Congress would do everything to bring peace to the violence-ridden state and put it back on the rails of development and progress, she said.

The PDP-Congress combine is committed to remove the 'gun culture' and restore the honour and respect of the



At Mrs Sonia Gandhi's rally in Baramullah on Sunday. — AFP

Kashmiris. Those who work against secularism and democracy will only bring destruction. "Democracy and secularism are very close to us and we will not compromise on it. Those who will oppose this will only find themselves in trouble because it could bring only destruction", she said.

9-f p... 9...
Congratulating Kashmiri people for participating in the Assembly elections, Mrs Gandhi said she saluted the bravery of the people who exercised their franchise braving threats from extremists. "It is a victory of our democracy and trump of our secular values," she said.

Mrs Gandhi said she understood the plight of Kashmiri Pandits. She praised the people of Kashmir for observing a three-day bandh in protest against the killings of innocent pandits in Nadimarg. "We will have to work like this in order to restore peace and harmony in the state", she said, showering praises for people living near the LoC for showing exemplary courage.

Mrs Gandhi tried to strike a cord with the violence-affected Kashmiris. She said she understood their trauma because she has been herself a victim of terrorism — her mother-in-law and husband were killed by terrorists.

She assured the people that her party would try to take J&K Kashmir out of the mess and work for prosperity. The Congress chief ministers' conclave has decided to set aside quota in educational institutions for Kashmiri youths, she said.

PM suggests stronger cooperation between India and China

Atal recipe for 'Asian' century



Vajpayee and Putin on board the Silver Whisper luxury liner in St Petersburg. (Reuters)

BHARAT BHUSHAN

St Petersburg, May 31: The twenty-first century could truly become "an Asian century" if India and China, which account for one-third of humanity, strengthened their cooperation, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has suggested to Chinese President Hu Jintao.

The two leaders are here at the invitation of Russian President Vladimir Putin to participate in the tercentenary celebrations of St Petersburg.

Vajpayee's first ever meeting with Hu took place when he called on the Chinese leader at the Corinthia Nevskij Hotel this morning.

On his part, Hu seems to have

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reacted positively to Vajpayee's sentiments. He did not use the term "Asian century" like Vajpayee but reciprocated by saying that both sides should work for a constructive and cooperative relationship.

He claimed that the new Chinese leadership gave "top priority" to the relationship with India and wanted to proceed "vigorously" to strengthen it.

Hu told Vajpayee that India and China being two big developing countries, with identical views on several international issues, should strengthen their cooperation. This, he felt, could contribute to both regional as well as international stability.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Atal recipe

FROM PAGE 1 9-6

The meeting between the two leaders was considered an important preparatory engagement before a summit meeting in Beijing in the fourth week of June.

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This would be the first visit to China in a decade by an Indian Prime Minister.

Ten years ago, then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao had travelled to China and signed the Peace and Tranquillity Treaty with Beijing. As a consequence, the two neighbours managed to tackle issues relating to demarcation of the border between them without letting the process of clarification of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) becoming an obstacle in the way of realising their potential for cooperation.

Now Vajpayee seeks to transform the relationship further with China, which has emerged not only as an economic giant with a significant share of global trade and investment but also as a huge modern military power.

Foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal, who was present at the meeting between Vajpayee and Hu, claimed that a clear desire to expand and reinforce bilateral ties was evident on both sides. The Prime Minister's forthcoming visit to China was seen as contributing to this goal, he claimed.

Although the two sides are willing to tackle the border demarcation question through "time and patience", no contentious issues were raised today. "This was not the occasion to discuss the border issues. The attempt is to create a propitious atmosphere to address them," Sibal said.

The Chinese President apparently recalled visiting India in 1984 and told Vajpayee that the visit had left a deep impression on him. Hu also said that he was quite convinced that during the last 20 years, a lot of progress had been made in India.

The issue of India-Pakistan relations did not figure in any significant way in the meeting. "There was merely a mention of Pakistan but I would not say that they discussed Pakistan," Sibal said.

Sibal said Hu and Vajpayee also discussed the situation in Iraq and agreed that "the Iraq question had not been fully resolved". The two leaders exchanged views on the humanitarian situation in Iraq, the need for reconstruction and the possible post-war arrangement within the US framework. "Both sides agreed that their respective missions to the UN would remain in close touch on Iraq," Sibal claimed.

The Indian foreign secretary summed up the Vajpayee-Hu encounter, saying: "It was a very good meeting with all the right things being said."

If Vajpayee wanted to convey the message that India is seeking to take its relationship with its northern neighbour to a higher level, he could not have done it better in the brief encounter. The two leaders met for about 30 minutes and about half the time is likely to have been taken up in interpretation.

Hu apparently spoke in Mandarin and his interaction with Vajpayee was easy, warm and functional.

1 JUN 2003

Iraq dominates PM's talks with leaders

By Amit Baruah

ST. PETERSBURG, MAY 31. It was Iraq all the way. Whether it was with the Presidents of Russia, France and China, Vladimir Putin, Jacques Chirac and Hu Jintao, or the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, Iraq figured as a common theme in all the meetings the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, had last night and this morning.

Other than, perhaps, with the British leader, Tony Blair, the need to strengthen the United Nations in the post-Iraq context was another issue that figured prominently in all the Prime Minister's meetings.

As far as India-Pakistan was concerned, both Mr. Blair and Mr. Chirac warmly welcomed the latest initiatives taken by Mr. Vajpayee. Given the complete understanding that India and Russia have on Pakistan-related issues, there was no reference to the question in the Vajpayee-Putin meeting.

The Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal, said that Mr. Putin, who met the Prime Minister on board the "Silver Whisper" luxury liner after midnight, was described by Mr. Vajpayee as a "trusted friend" of India. Mr. Putin

specifically noted the multi-dimensional cooperation between the two countries in the military, technical and space fields and the successful launch of the Geostationary Satellite Launch Vehicle.

Interestingly, it was pointed out that Russia had raised the issue of easing nuclear supplier group (NSG) restrictions on countries such as India at an NSG meeting in Pusan, Korea, from May 19-23. Though the matter had been raised earlier, too, this time the Russians have chosen to issue a public statement on the issue that impedes civilian nuclear cooperation between Moscow and New Delhi.

"We believe that the activities of the NSG should not, of course, create obstacles for international cooperation in the peaceful use of atomic energy and take into account the new realities in the field in an adequate and timely manner," the May 27 statement said.

In his meeting with Mr. Chirac, the Prime Minister congratulated the French President for his invitation to select developing countries to hold talks with the G-8 on June 1, ahead of the main meeting of the "club of the rich".

Mr. Chirac, in turn, conveyed his "great appreciation" for the initiative taken by Mr. Vajpayee to mend fences with Pakistan. The French side, the Foreign Secretary stated, had a perfect understanding of India's position on Pakistan.

"They (the French) do feel that Pakistan should seize the opportunity provided by the Prime Minister's visit," Mr. Sibal said adding that Paris would raise the issue of terrorism with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, when he visited France sometime next month. He said Mr. Chirac reiterated the need for a multipolar world and that he saw India as one of the "poles" in the world. The issue of relaxing the NSG guidelines was also raised with the French side.

He claimed that France saw nuclear power as a practical option for India and that "doors should be opened" to India on the issue.

In the Vajpayee-Blair meeting, the "transparency and clarity" of the language used by the British Prime Minister on Pakistan was "striking", Indian officials said. They quoted Mr. Blair as saying that the "ball was in Pakistan's court" as far as

India-Pakistan issues were concerned. He was "very appreciative" of Mr. Vajpayee's initiative on Pakistan, describing the move as "statesmanlike" and noted positive efforts to restore the Delhi-Lahore bus service.

Mr. Blair is said to have told Mr. Vajpayee that the Americans were continuing to put pressure on Pakistan — that was part of a bigger American conception of the future of Pakistan itself. The context was the fear of Pakistan being taken over by Islamic extremists. There was considerable discussion on the ground situation in Iraq as well as the overall situation in the Middle East given the continuing concerns of the U.S. on Iran.

Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Blair are said to have discussed problems that might arise in future — Iran, Syria and a possible resurgence of Ba'athist elements in Iraq. The British leader is reported to have ruled out the possibility of military action against Iran.

In response to a question, Mr. Sibal said that Mr. Blair made no request for India to send troops to Iraq at today's meeting — a suggestion that has been repeatedly made by the U.S.

THE HINDU
THE HINDU

1 JUN 2003

Delhi won't question Washington on Iran

Press Trust of India 3/15 W. 509

ST PETERSBURG (Russia), May 30. — As Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee arrived here today for some high-voltage diplomacy and interaction with the world's most powerful leaders, India indicated that it was in no mood to question the US on the emerging situation in Iran where Washington even talked of a regime change.

"We have no reason to get involved in discussions with interlocutors which in any way questions the policy of another big power," foreign secretary Mr Kanwal Sibal told reporters on board the Prime Minister's special aircraft from Munich after his two-day visit to Germany.

Mr Sibal was asked whether during Mr Vajpayee's meetings in St Petersburg, India would campaign against the latest US moves in Iran.

Mr Vajpayee, during his stay here and in Evian in France which hosts the G-8 summit, would hold talks with leaders of China, France, Germany, Russia, Britain and other key nations.

Mr Vajpayee is one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's 43 special invitees gathered for the tercentenary celebrations of St Petersburg's founding.

He said, the fact that the focus had shifted from reconstruction in Iraq to Iran, was "not on our agenda".

Mr Sibal said India expected the USA and Iran, to sort out matters. This would be the first occasion when Mr Vajpayee would be meeting many of them after he announced fresh peace initiatives with Pakistan.

Lahore-Delhi bus: Pakistan has said it needs 10 days to sort out technical matters relating to the resumption of the Lahore-Delhi bus service. Mr Sibal told the accompanying journalists that Islamabad's message had been routed to New Delhi.

THE STATESMAN

3 1 MAY 2003

Centre's Pak policy lacks clarity: Sonia

Statesman News Service

SRINAGAR, May 30. — Extending full support to the NDA government on matters of national security, cross-border terrorism and Indo-Pak relations, the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, today said that the Centre's policy on Pakistan lacked clarity, consistency and conviction. She, however, added that "the doors of diplomacy and the windows of dialogue with Pakistan should always be kept open and active".

In her opening address to the 5th Congress chief ministers' conclave, which opened here this afternoon amid tight security at the Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention Center on the banks of Dal Lake, Ms Gandhi said that unlike the NDA government's stand on terrorism, which was a vacillating one, Congress' position has been unwavering.

Speaking on the forthcoming Assembly polls in five states, Mrs Gandhi stressed on projecting the achievements of the Congress governments in four of the states.

Lauding the Rajasthan government's efforts to mitigate drought, she said the efforts had to be sustained. She said the Congress would pressure the Centre to double the foodgrain allocation for May, June and July to all drought-hit states. The Congress President will discuss

strategies for the forthcoming elections in five states in the country later tonight, Focus will be on economy, employment and security.

In the first session of today's meeting, each state government presented a note spelling out what had been accomplished out of the plan of action formulated at Mount Abu. The second session was on 'Congress Ka haath Garib Ke Saath'.

Other issues on the agenda are poverty alleviation, agriculture, SCs/STs, OBCs, minorities and women with special focus on poverty alleviation, education and health, administrative reforms, investment promotion and infrastructure with special focus on water management and power sector reform.

Announcing a package for Kashmiri people, the Congress president said separate quotas for J&K students would be introduced in colleges, universities and technical institutions in different Congress-ruled states. Beside, six Congress-ruled states — Chattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttaranchal — have offered to promote tourism in J&K. "J&K represents the quintessence of Indian secularism. In the historic state elections seven months back, the people of all regions in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh came out boldly and exercised their franchise," she observed.

THE STATESMAN

9 1 MAY 2003

Iran not harbouring Al-Qaeda, says India

By Amit Baruah

ST. PETERSBURG, MAY 30. India today made it clear that it did not share persistent concerns being expressed by the United States that Iran was harbouring Al-Qaeda elements and interfering in Iraq by supporting Shia resurgence in the war-torn country.

"Our own reading is not quite the same," the Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal, said today, adding that Teheran had told India that the Iranian model did not apply to Iraq.

His remarks come amid continuing reports in the Western press that the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, favoured a change of regime in Iran.

They also come at a time when the U.S. is mounting pressure on India to send troops to Iraq to take part in a "stabilisation force" under the "Authority" of the occupying powers — the U.S. and Britain.

So far, the Indians have not obliged the U.S. by agreeing to send troops to Iraq. Evidently, India feels that after the destabilising effects of the unilateral military action in Iraq, American attention turning to Iran could further impact on an already difficult situation in West Asia.

Making it plain that India had no intention of playing intermediary between Iran and the U.S., Mr. Sibal said that within the

Western world there were differing views on the "mischief-making" by the Iranians. "Some partners of the U.S. don't have the same view," he said adding that there was "serious concern" that an already difficult situation could get worsened by the opening of a "new front".

During the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's just-concluded talks with the German leadership in Berlin, the Indian side sensed that Germany wanted the United Nations to play an important role "no matter what is being said and done at the moment".

The Germans conveyed that the U.N. alone had the expertise to deal with complex situations.

Asked whether India would take a more "proactive" role in expressing its views on Iran, given the close relationship between the two countries, Mr. Sibal said everyone was aware of India's developing relations with Iran and the strategic importance New Delhi attached to the relationship. There should be no doubt, he said, in anyone's mind about how India viewed Iran.

To a question whether Iran and not Iraq would dominate the discussions, both in St. Petersburg and on the sidelines of the G-8 deliberations in Evian, France, he said the concerns that Germany had would be shared with its other partners. On the issue of nuclear safeguards to be adopted by Iran as

being urged, among others, by the European Union, he said India had a *sui generis* position on the question since it related to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

As world leaders gather in St. Petersburg, it is becoming clear that the agenda of the Bush administration, as feared by many, will not stop with Iraq, but could well extend to Iran. The "axis of evil" theory propounded by the U.S. President, George W. Bush, has already "taken care" of Iraq and "concerns" about Iran are clearly being expressed.

Though India is very much part and parcel of the U.S.-led "coalition" against terrorism, New Delhi clearly differs from Washington as far as Iran is concerned — a point that has clearly been made today.

If the U.S. displays the same appetite for "regime change" in Iran as it did in Iraq, then India might well be forced to make a critical choice in displeasing the U.S. on Teheran.

That stage, clearly, is still to be reached, but India has signalled that it is not about to follow the "line on Iran" blindly. India is aware that much of what it has been doing in Afghanistan could not have been possible but for the ongoing cooperation with Iran — activities that have caused concern even to Pakistan. That situation is unlikely to change anytime soon.

THE HINDU

Iraq peace-keeping

51-8 ✓ Keep our boys home 2003

Whether or not Indian troops should be sent for peacekeeping duties in Iraq is a more complex question than the newly-minted "America first" lobby in the government thinks. It is good therefore, that the cabinet committee on security could not decide on the issue before the Prime Minister left for his three nation European tour. Apparently, LK Advani and George Fernandes had some reservations. They should press their concerns strongly, particularly as has been loudly whispered, Brajesh Mishra has already promised Washington that troops will be sent. The first objection is the one India raised earlier — peacekeeping duties can only be under an UN mandate. There's no sign that in the foreseeable future, US troops will be handing over Iraq to a multilateral authority. Washington officials are talking about keeping US soldiers for years, not months. How can India send troops in this situation? That we have sent our ambassador back to Baghdad is not the argument.

Reestablishing diplomatic ties with an Iraq under US suzerainty may be practical policy but getting our soldiers to police that country is a flight of fancy. Not all Iraqis, unsurprisingly, are happy that Americans have decided to make them free. Quite a few are ready to express that unhappiness in violence. US troops are being targeted and will be in the future and these are early days. Indian troops will be seen as an adjunct to the occupying force, which is so hated. Why should soldiers die for a cause only Brajesh and his overseas mentors favour? India may have been powerless, like the rest of the world, to stop the Iraq war. But it is within our power not to get into a mess that is Washington's creation and if there is any justice in this world, Washington should pay for.

Sharing the mess, as opposed to sharing the spoils, is possibly the most important reason the US wants other countries to send troops. America is entering the presidential electoral cycle. War sells but prolonged occupation does not. George Bush's advisors would want the focus shifted from US soldiers as the boss starts his reelection bid. The same domestic political compulsions should guide the Indian government. General elections in India are also in 2004. In fact, they will have to be held before the November US presidential elections. Why should the Vajpayee government have to tackle questions on being an US lackey on an issue for which India is not responsible? The BJP should tell ministers that the Opposition will have a field day exploiting the image of Indian soldiers in occupied Iraq.

Sending troops may polarise the Muslim vote and help the Congress. It may upset a number of allies before the elections and the BJP needs most of them. Worthy and good decisions are buried for similar political considerations. Sending troops to Iraq is a bad decision also in principle. Don't touch it, as we said earlier!

THE STATESMAN

30 MAY 2003

MEA wary of sending troops to Iraq

9.8.03
9.8.03
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: India is keeping in abeyance any decision on sending troops to support the US occupation of Iraq but has decided to send its ambassador back to Baghdad.

The cabinet committee on security (CCS), which met on Monday, authorised the external affairs ministry to "obtain clarifications" from the United Nations, the UN special adviser and the occupying powers in Iraq about how any troop deployment would work. The MEA will report back to the CCS on the issue, foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal said in a briefing to reporters.

Despite relentless questioning, Mr Sibal deflected the issue of sending troops to Iraq by saying the UN resolution needed to be "clarified".

When it was pointed out that the resolution clearly said UN members could send troops only under the auspices of the occupying powers, Mr Sibal said, "There are certain things in the resolution that are very clear and, therefore, we will also draw very clear conclusions

"There are certain things...that are very clear and, therefore, we will also draw very clear conclusions and since we have clarity of policy on some of these issues, things are very clear"
— Kanwal Sibal

and since we have clarity of policy on some of these issues, things are very clear." He then added to a burst of laughter, "No, I think that is trying to trap me into saying something. Let's not get into that."

Mr Sibal also parried a question on what would happen to the parliament resolution seeking withdrawal of troops.

The decision on the return of the Indian ambassador, however, marks India's clear decision to engage with the US and UK occupying forces in Iraq.

The government is treading warily on the subject of sending troops since domestic public opinion is notoriously fickle about Indian par-

ticipation in military activities outside the geographical bounds of the country. "Indians are a peaceable people," said an MEA official. "They are as zealously patriotic as any when it comes to defending their own territory as in Kargil, but they are not gung ho about war as such."

Of immediate relevance is the Indian intervention in Sri Lanka in 1987. Billed as a peace-keeping force, three divisions of the Indian Army battled LTTE guerrillas, losing over 1,000 men in the process.

Right through, there was little popular support for the intervention. "If the Indian public could not support a military intervention for very obvious Indian interests in a place 40 km off its coast, it is unlikely that they will back one in support of the US in a foreign country thousands of kilometres away," says a retired Army general who served in what is now called India's forgotten war.

The CCS stand means that the government is weighing the political cost the government may have to pay to send Indian troops to Iraq against the gains being promised by the US.

NEW DELHI COY ABOUT JOINING US-LED 'STABILISING' FORCE IN IRAQ

India still undecided on Iraq

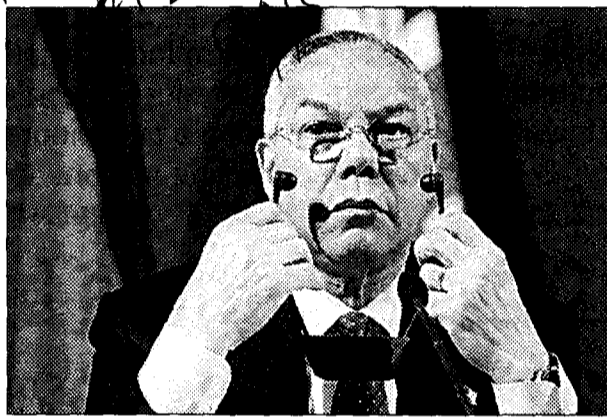
Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 23 MAY

THE United Nations Security Council resolution on Thursday may have imparted legitimacy to the United States and UK's presence in Iraq, but is yet to tempt India to shed its inhibitions on joining the "stabilisation" force Washington has planned to deal with the anarchy in the country.

While the resolution addresses the concerns raised by the dissenting European troika of France, Russia and Germany and has cleared the sale of Iraqi oil, New Delhi still doesn't consider it to be an incentive adequate enough to encourage India to avail of the US offer to join in the "stabilisation" operations.

The foreign ministry on Friday sought to withhold its position on the issue, clearly indicating that it was keeping its options open on a law-enforcement assignment in Iraq. "I don't have a specific response to that as yet. We are studying the resolution," a spokesperson said when asked if India will consider sending peacekeepers to Baghdad in the light of the Security Council resolution.

The reluctance to take a specif-



EAR-MARKED! US secretary of state Colin Powell at a press conference after a meeting of the foreign ministers of the Group of Eight countries in Paris on Friday. — AP

ic stand showed that New Delhi was keen to play a significant role in Iraq and have a slice of the reconstruction pie, but was still hamstrung by the resolution Parliament unanimously adopted just as the US forces were on the verge of defeating Saddam.

Given the dynamics of domestic politics and the lingering legacy of anti-Americanism, it was evident that the NDA government would feel constrained to act coy as long as the assignment did not have the cover of a UN-

sponsored multinational effort. The resolution passed on Thursday clearly stated that any efforts towards stability and security of Iraq will be under the aegis of the "occupying powers".

Sources said there are indications, something on which New Delhi is banking, that some other countries may lobby for a second resolution that would facilitate their joining the "stabilisation" operations under more clear UN aegis, buffering them against criticism of tailing the superpower.

Govt hails lifting of sanctions

New Delhi
23 MAY

INDIA on Friday welcomed the lifting of the 13-year old economic, financial and trade sanctions against Iraq by the United Nations but remained non-committal on offering its troops for "stabilisation duties" in the war-torn country in the absence of United Nations' command.

"We welcome the unanimous adoption of the UN Security Council resolution for several reasons. The long suffering people of Iraq deserve all the help that they can get from the international community," an external affairs ministry spokesman told reporters.

Asked about the prospects of India sending its troops to Iraq towards "stability and security" of Iraq which would be under the unified command of the "occupying powers" — the US and Britain — he said: "We are studying the resolution." — PTI

24 MAY 2003

The Economic Times

India to decide on role in Iraq

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, MAY 22. As the United Nations Security Council reads an appeal to member-states to participate in the stabilisation and reconstruction of Iraq, the Government will come to a conclusion soon on defining India's role.

A few weeks ago, the Bush administration had suggested that India pick up a big stake in Iraq that could include military operations to stabilise an entire sector. The proposal was discussed at some length in the recent high-level consultations between New Delhi and Washington.

The Government had insisted that it would need a mandate from the U.N. before it could participate in the administration of post-war Iraq. Diplomatic consultations at the Security Council over the last few days have produced that framework.

The European powers — Russia, France, and Germany — who had opposed the U.S. war

in Iraq, have now endorsed a formula for the interim management of Iraq after extracting concessions from Washington on enhancing the U.N. role. The new Security Council resolution is being passed under Article VII of the U.N. Charter and the member-states are obliged to support it.

India is fully aware of the historic opportunity at hand in Iraq. Although India has participated in many U.N. peacekeeping operations in the past, this time it will take on a large strategic responsibility in an area of vital interest to it — the Persian Gulf.

This is not the first time, however, that India will take part in an occupation authority in another country. At the end of the Second World War, although India was not sovereign, it was represented in the occupation authorities in Germany and Japan. The first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, decided that India would continue this standing after it became inde-

pendent.

Informed sources here say that ideological questions are not the ones that are at the top of its mind over Iraq. Those will largely be sorted out by the U.N. resolution. It is the practical aspects of joining in the stabilisation force in Iraq that India is now mulling over.

A major Indian role in Iraq will surely signal the emergence of India as a great power in the Indian Ocean region. New Delhi, however, wants to balance this historic imperative with considerations of capability, costs, and the complexity of the situation on the ground.

"A good assessment," sources here say, "of the prospects for success and the potential for failure" will be at the heart of the balance sheet that India will have to prepare in finalising the extent of its role in Iraq.

The Government will have to come up with a view on the size of the force that India can deploy without affecting its own security, the costs of that de-

ployment, and assessment of the political dynamics in Iraq.

The countries in the Persian Gulf, including Iran, are unlikely to oppose a visible Indian role in Iraq. For many of them, an Indian role might be more acceptable than the presence of large Western forces in Iraq.

India is aware of the importance of an early decision. If India chooses to go into Iraq, it makes sense to move in early. Any political dithering now could mean losing a rare opportunity to contribute to the development of a country that traditionally has been a welcoming political and economic space for India.

In the end, the Government's decision is about whether India is prepared to undertake a weighty role in its own extended neighbourhood. Such a role is not merely about rewards; it also involves risks. The debate in the Government over the next few days will reveal whether India is ready for the calling of a great power.

23 MAY 2003

THE HINDU

Sinha silent on Pak re-entry into C'wealth

But indicates unhappiness with Islamabad

By Rashmee Z. Ahmed
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

London: Foreign minister Yashwant Sinha has questioned Pakistan's willingness to capture and hand over alleged foreign terrorists targeting India from Pakistani soil.



Yashwant Sinha

Islamabad seemed to have no difficulty handing over almost 500 Afghan, Arab and other Al Qaida-linked terrorists to the US, Mr Sinha pointedly told the BBC, alongside a crucial Commonwealth meeting to discuss Pakistan's re-admission to the fold.

Commentators said it may be the clearest indication yet that New Delhi remains sorely disappointed with Islamabad's attitude to democratic means of discourse.

Sources told this paper it was significant that Mr Sinha had already held a bilateral meeting with his Nigerian counterpart, ahead of the eight-member Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) to discuss Pakistan's re-admission to the Commonwealth.

At the last CMAG in November, India and Nigeria, both of whom serve on the CMAC, had united to scupper a strong British-Australian bid to re-admit Pakistan to the Commonwealth.

Mr Sinha's obvious pique at perceived double standards in the war on terrorism comes amidst mounting speculation that Pakistan will remain a pariah nation within the Commonwealth for the fourth straight year after the October coup that deposed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Until now, buoyed by the new Indo-Pak bonhomie, Mr

Sinha and New Delhi had consistently and diplomatically refused to speculate on whether or not Pakistan would be re-admitted to the councils of the Commonwealth.

Mr Sinha said it was pointless to discuss whether or not India should focus on cross-border terrorism without addressing the underlying Kashmir issue. He said there could be no moral justification for the acts of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and these must be condemned in the same unequivocal terms that the international community had condemned the recent attacks in Casablanca, Bali and elsewhere.

India has consistently refused to say whether or not it would support Pakistan's application for lifting the ban. Until now, New Delhi has preferred to describe the Commonwealth deliberations as those of a "multilateral" body.

On Monday, Mr Sinha alternated his open disappointment at Islamabad's attitude to India-centric terrorism with bland diplomat-speak. He said he would not like to "pre-empt" the CMAG deliberations.

And he denied any linkage between the position that India may or may not take in the CMAG deliberations with recent initiatives taken by India to improve bilateral relations with Pakistan. Mr Sinha's visit to London comes straight after a reportedly useful meeting with US Secretary of State Colin Powell in Moscow.

Asserting that past agreements could not be ignored, Mr Sinha said India and Pakistan would have to "talk about talks first" and dismissed Islamabad's claim that it had no control over the activities of militant groups.

"I don't think it is open to any set of countries to completely ignore agreements reached in the past and say we will begin with a new slate," Mr Sinha said.

Brajesh to brief PM on Bush talks

Manali
15 MAY

16/5
JUST back from a visit to the United States and UK amidst India's peace initiatives with Pakistan, National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra will arrive here on Friday to brief Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on his discussions.

Mr Mishra was unable to meet Mr Vajpayee as he returned to Delhi on Monday night, just hours before he left the capital for this valley for his annual summer retreat.

According to PMO officials, Mr Mishra will arrive here around noon and meet Mr Vajpayee immediately thereafter to apprise him of the discussions he had with US President George W Bush, National Security Adviser Condolessa Rice, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage besides leaders of Britain and France during his week-long trip.

Mr Vajpayee, while enjoying

his vacation along with his family in a cottage in Prini village here, is also keeping a tab on the developments relating to India and Pakistan, particularly the statements and actions emerging from Islamabad regarding New Delhi's peace initiatives.

On his arrival on Tuesday, he indicated that India was keenly watching Pakistani moves as he told reporters that "we have extended a hand of friendship, let us see what response comes from there (Pakistan)."

Clearing of some "urgent files" is also on the agenda of the Prime Minister who arrived here on Tuesday for a six-day vacation at the cottage surrounded by wooded mountains.

Morning and evening strolls in the vicinity of the cottage also form part of his engagements here. He has also brought a set of books for reading during his stay here and is unlikely to travel out of the cottage, especially towards market areas.

—PTI

16 MAY 2003

6 MAY 2003

The Economic Times

Iraq peace role under UN: Delhi

Indo-Asian News Service
and PTI

NEW DELHI, May 14. — The USA and Britain have proposed that India join the stabilisation force in post-war Iraq. Reacting cautiously, New Delhi has told the USA that a "UN cover" is necessary for it to be part of such a force.

The proposed force will be similar to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) set up in Afghanistan after the collapse of the Taliban regime.

National Security Adviser Mr Brajesh Mishra, just back from a three-day visit to Washington during which he held talks with his US counterpart Ms Condoleezza Rice and had a meeting with President George W Bush, hinted at the proposal while speaking at a book release function here last evening.

"Today when we are told to do this and that (in Iraq by the USA), we say you need a UN cover," he said, adding there were "differences in approach" between the two countries on the issue.

An external affairs ministry spokesman said today that no formal request had been received from the USA for sending troops to Iraq for peace-keeping operations.

"Our policy in regard to peace-keeping is quite clear and well established," he said, adding India had participated in such operations under the UN auspices.

India, Pakistan and The Philippines are said to be the only countries from Asia invited to join the stabilisation force.

The move comes at a time when law and order in Baghdad and other cities is said to be breaking down and the 150,000 troops from the USA and its allies are finding it difficult to control the situation.

Informed sources said the proposal was for India to send what was described as a "divisional headquarters" with a few hundred troops that could coordinate the work of troops from other countries.

But they noted that India had sent troops abroad only under the UN command. They also noted that

Finding WMD not vital: UK

LONDON, May 14. — Finding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is not vital to justify the decision by London and Washington to invade the country, foreign secretary Mr Jack Straw said today.

Asked on *BBC Radio* whether the failure to unearth significant evidence of Mr Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons arsenal was vital, Mr Straw replied: "It's not crucially important."

"The evidence in respect of Iraq was so strong that the (UN) Security Council on 8 November said unanimously that Iraq's proliferation and possession of WMD and unlawful weapons systems were 'a threat to international peace and security'. The Iraqi regime had plenty of notice to destroy the material," he said. — AFP

the Indian Parliament had passed a strong resolution deploring the US-led attack on Iraq.

Sources said there were differences in the government over India's joining the stabilisation force.

"There is a view that India can join if it is a broad multinational force. Another view is that any participation should be under UN coordination," a senior official said.

India will be keenly watching the fate of a draft resolution the USA has circulated in the UN on the Iraq situation and the role it envisages for the world body in post-war Iraq.

The main thrust of the draft resolution is lifting the decade-old UN sanctions on Baghdad that would leave major political and financial levers of the future Iraqi government in the coalition forces and the interim administration being set up.

Though the resolution speaks of a UN special coordinator for Iraq to advise parties and coordinate humanitarian activities, it provides no political authority to the official.

Editorial: Clare Short quits,
page 6

15 MAY 2003

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THE STATESMAN

HD-1
14/5

French diplomat briefs Mishra about G-8 summit

By Valju Naravane *gudi*

PARIS, MAY 13. India's National Security Adviser, Brajesh Mishra, held talks here with Maurice Gourdault-Montagne, President Chirac's top Diplomatic Adviser, during a brief stopover on his way back from Washington.

Mr. Gourdault-Montagne, who represents France in the Indo-French strategic dialogue, briefed Mr. Mishra about the upcoming G-8 industrialised nations summit to be held in the spa town of Evian on the Franco-Swiss border from June 1-3.

India is one of 15 non-G8 nations invited to the summit and the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, will travel to France for the meeting.

International security and economic development are the two major themes of the summit, which is expected to be rife with tensions following Franco-U.S. differences over the war in Iraq.

The summit will give a clear indication as to whether relations between France and America are finally on the mend.

France has received a severe rapping on the knuckles from the U.S. Government and Paris is likely to be much more conciliatory over the new U.N. Security Council resolution tabled by the U.S. and Britain over establishing a coalition authority to manage the affairs of Iraq.

Franco-U.S. relations as well as

developments in Europe after the Iraq war as well as the role of the United Nations in the reconstruction of Iraq featured in the discussions. France is of the opinion that the United Nations should be given the "vital role" promised it by the U.S. President, George W. Bush and the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, just before they went to war against Iraq.

However, France, like China, Russia or Germany has decided it will take a "pragmatic approach" over the question of who will govern Iraq and how. France is not keen to further poison its already shaky relationship with the U.S. by being obdurate over the U.S. desire to keep all the cards in its hands.

Both India and France share the view that a multi-polar world, with equal and responsible powers exercising influence over world affairs is essential to counter U.S. unilateralism.

The U.S. show of might and determination has added urgency to this imperative. India is therefore likely to strengthen her ties with France. France was eager to know the details of India's road map for talks with Pakistan and congratulated Mr. Vajpayee for his new peace initiative.

Informed sources say the French understood India's position that talks could be jeopardised by fresh terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir.

The next session of the Indo-French strategic dialogue is to be held in July.

14 MAY 2003

THE HINDU

101 'U.N., NAM HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY'

Our stand on Iraq not ambivalent, says PM

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 29. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today asserted that India had taken a clear stand on the Iraq war and that New Delhi neither wanted Baghdad to lose its freedom nor that the world order should collapse on account of it.

Responding to the Opposition charge that the Government's stand was "ambivalent", he said India was firm that both the United Nations and the Non-aligned Movement had a role to play in the resolution of the present Iraq crisis. The stand on Iraq could not be made into a question of contentious domestic politics he said and urged a consensus on foreign policy.

Mr. Vajpayee was speaking at a function organised to mark the completion of five years of the National Democratic Alliance Government, starting from his second tenure as Prime Minister in March 1998.

The Government conducted an independent foreign policy, keeping in mind the national interest and without any pressure.

"Any government will conduct (its foreign policy) which protects the country pride and dignity," he said.

Mr. Vajpayee said it was the Congress that needed to make its position clear on several issues including on coalition.

The party, he suggested,

should declare its stand on coalition formations as it had done in Maharashtra.

The Congress and others were painting a grim and depressing scenario, when in reality the real face of India was changing for the better, he said. Referring to the Congress slogan "Congress ka haath, garib ke saath", Mr. Vajpayee said tauntingly that one thought poverty had been eradicated (an apparent reference to Congress' 'Garibi hatao' (eradicate poverty) slogan of the 1970s); "how did it resurface?"

Taking offence to charges of corruption and scams in the NDA regime, the Prime Minister said his Government had made all efforts to encourage clean people.

He added that the case of bribery registered against some DDA officials showed how his Government wanted to come down on corruption.

Terming the coalition government experience 'sour and sweet', Mr. Vajpayee claimed that the Congress would never be able to replicate it.

'Vajpayee our leader': Page 8

Report denied

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 29. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today denied a report that the U.S. President, George W. Bush, had on three occasions sought military support in the current war against Iraq and that he had turned it down as many times.

Addressing a meeting to mark five years in office of the NDA Government, Mr. Vajpayee said neither was he approached nor had he given any assurance adding that such reports create needless confusion.

Bring an early end to war: Sinha

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, MARCH 29. The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, says the military campaign in Iraq has "run into difficulties" and not gone according to American and British plans. Talking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Sinha said a prolonged war would create its own complications, which would not be in the interest of either the combatants or the rest of the world.

When this correspondent pointed to India's "restrained and pragmatic" position on Iraq, he said that perhaps, the reaction of the rest of the world was along similar lines.

"A Foreign Minister of a very important country told me (before the conflict) that no country was in a position to impede the Americans from going to war... therefore, you will find there is a certain helplessness in the international community... apart from saying that war should not have happened, war should be brought to an end, there is not much that is being done," Mr. Sinha said.

In the given situation coun-



tries that were "better placed than" India, or leaders of different groupings of nations, were finding themselves "somewhat lost," Mr. Sinha remarked.

Asked about the killings of 52 civilians in a single attack in Baghdad, he said that India had already expressed its anguish over the war. "We have also expressed our anguish over the civilian casualties... innocent civilians are bound to suffer as a result of war". India was against the war and since it had started, New Delhi had been calling for its early end.

On the Opposition charges that the Government position on Iraq was weak, Mr. Sinha said he did not think that there was any difference between the

Opposition and the Government in so far as taking a position was concerned. "It's only in terms of the language in which this disapproval of war has to be expressed..."

Asked about the Nadimarg massacre in Jammu and Kashmir where Pandits were killed by militants, and the Government response, he said this was India's war; "we have to fight it, we have to win it". Even after January 12, 2002, when the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, declared that his country's territory would not be used for terrorist activity, infiltrators had crossed over and a number of terrorist acts had taken place. The fact that not a single infiltrator had been nabbed by Pakistan on the Line of Control showed that its Army was "hand in glove" with the terrorists. While Islamabad had refused to hand over to New Delhi terrorists and criminals who were Indian nationals, it had shown no hesitation in handing over its own citizens to the U.S. for indulging in terrorism.

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THE HINDU

30 MAR 2003

Samata Party slams Govt. stand on Iraq

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 2. The Samata Party, a key NDA ally, today criticised the Vajpayee Government's stand on the U.S.-led attack on Iraq and demanded steps to stop the war immediately.

The party wanted the Government to bring in a resolution condemning the war for unanimous adoption by Parliament on April 7, when the Budget session recommences.

"India cannot give the U.S. the right to spread chaos. Iraqi people alone have the right to decide who should be their leader," the Samata spokesperson and general secretary, Shambu Shrivastava, said at a press conference. The party would hold demonstrations on April 5 and make an appeal for boycott of all U.S. products.

"The Government should immediately announce that the

country would organise humanitarian relief other than the U.N.-sanctioned food-for-oil programme," he said.

Terming the war "unjust and inhuman", he said the U.S.-led forces were "deliberately targeting" innocent civilians, since the "uprising" by the Iraqi people, which the U.S. planners were anticipating, did not occur.

While maintaining that the party's representatives in the Government — the Defence Minister, George Fernandes and the Minister of State for External Affairs, Digvijay Singh — had tried to convey their unhappiness over the Iraq issue, Dr. Shrivastava said his party would ask the Ministers to take up the matter with the Government. As the party was in Government it would not look nice to raise it outside. "But if the party's viewpoint is not being registered, then it was time to

state it openly."

He alleged that the foreign policy establishment was infested with people who thought that the interests of India and the U.S. were the same. The policy need not be Pakistan-centric or obsessed by the U.S. Washington's support to Islamabad would continue and its interest was to capture oil reserves and secure contracts, he added.

PTI reports

The CPI today charged the Vajpayee Government with being "soft" in condemning the U.S.-led war and accused it of playing the communal card with an eye on the vote bank.

"India has not declared the U.S. an aggressor when the entire world has condemned the attack on Iraq ignoring the U.N. The Vajpayee Government has sacrificed the pride of the nation," the CPI general secretary, A.B. Bardhan, told the All-India Youth Federation rally in Patna.

THE HINDU

APR 2003

U.S., U.K. demand for talks with Pak. 'insensitive': Sinha

NEW DELHI, APRIL 5. India has termed as "insensitive" the U.S. and British demand for resumption of a dialogue with Pakistan in the wake of the Nadimarg massacre of Kashmiri Pandits and asserted that it will not talk to Islamabad till it stops cross-border terrorism.

"It was clearly insensitive," the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, told ITV's 'Court Martial' programme. He was replying to a question whether New Delhi felt that the call for resumption of talks was unhelpful and provocative at this juncture.

"We have tried to explain to them (the U.S. and the U.K.) as clearly and as often as possible (India's position on terrorism)... but would agree that I don't think they understand it hundred per cent. They understand most of it.

410-1 671
"The difference in point of view is with regard to the dialogue. We have said clearly to them that cross-border terrorism and dialogue cannot go on simultaneously... First cross-border terrorism has to stop before a climate for dialogue is created," Mr. Sinha said.

Observing that India's decision not to talk to Pakistan was a "very effective policy", he said the Government would fight terrorism and do whatever was needed to ensure the safety of its people.

Asked if there was a possibility of a war with Pakistan if the U.S. pressure on Islamabad did not work and there was a step-up in infiltration, Mr. Sinha said: "The only thing I can tell you is that we will deal with the situation". — PTI

See also Page 8

SEE HINDU

India plays it safe on Iraq war

9/11/03
6/4

6 APR 2003

NILOVA ROY CHAUDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 5. — The war in Iraq appears to be in the final stages now, and the Indian government has still not directly named or condemned the USA. The BJP criticised America by name two weeks into the war in its Indore national executive meeting yesterday. But the Centre, although calling for a swift end to hostilities and warning of a huge humanitarian disaster, has stopped short of a diplomatic protest.

Senior government officials say the Centre's responses have been motivated by "pragmatic national interest".

An official said: "We are not in favour of this war, but why should we stick our necks out when even the P-5 countries (permanent members of the UN Security Council), which are directly involved and can influence issues, have not managed to stop the hostilities... We are not actively seeking to antagonise the world's only superpower, politically and economically".

Politically, because, it will not serve the country's national interest if, at some stage in the future, "the Kashmir issue is internationalised". Economically, the official argument goes, because of "increasing indications that Indian companies would be involved in a big way" in the post-war reconstruction effort.

'We are not in favour of this war... (But) we are not actively seeking to antagonise the world's only superpower, politically and economically'

The quick inroads into Baghdad indicate the war will not "drag on" and the Indian economy will "not be much affected", senior officials said. Exports are one area the government is looking at.

The commerce and industry minister, Mr Arun Jaitley, has said the government will wait for the Iraq war to be over before it fixes the ex-

port target for 2003-04 since the duration of the war would determine the level of impact on the Indian exports. According to the commerce minister, "the crucial factor for exports is the duration of war. If it is short, the impact will be absorbed, but if it continues for long exports would be hit".

He also said: "Indian companies will have an opportunity to actively participate in the reconstruction of Iraq."

There are, however, "some uncertainties", as senior officials put it, about contracts with Iraq under the UN Food for Oil programme drawn up when Mr Saddam Hussein was fully in charge. Orders worth around Rs 1,000 crore placed with Indian companies were in the process of being executed when the conflict broke out.

There is some apprehension among Indian officials that with two of the coalition countries, the USA and Australia, "having plenty of surplus foodgrain to sell", Indian suppliers "in this specific area may lose out. Much will depend officials said, "on how UN law is interpreted".

THE STATESMAN

8 APR 2003

Chandrika, Goh in Delhi

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent ⁸⁴AD-12 ^{g-f Pains}

NEW DELHI, APRIL 7. The Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, and the Singapore Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, arrived here tonight for talks with the Indian leaders. Upon arrival, Mr. Goh was exempted from filling a special form seeking health-related details in view of the SARS threat in Singapore. Nearly 70 persons accompanying Mr. Goh were, however, made to fill the form. Mr. Goh's meetings and engagements are slated for tomorrow, while Ms. Kumaratunga's meetings are on April 9 and 10. With regard to Singapore, the main item on the agenda will be the presentation of a report prepared by the Indo-Singapore Joint Study Group on the feasibility of concluding a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) between the two countries.

DELHI 8 APR 2003

8 APR 2003

Semantics holds up Iraq resolution

9-10-03

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, APRIL 7. In a change of tack, the Government today agreed to a possible Parliamentary resolution on Iraq, but still refused to "condemn" the U.S.-led invasion, insisting that the word "deplore" was sufficient to describe the military action.

Proceedings in both the Houses of Parliament were disrupted as agitated Opposition members insisted that the Iraq issue be taken up first and normal business suspended. In a bid to end the deadlock, the Lok Sabha Speaker, Manohar Joshi, convened a meeting of political leaders in the evening to secure agreement on the text of a possible resolution.

The meeting, which lasted about one-and-a-half hours, failed to reach a consensus. However, it was decided that yet another meeting on the issue be held tomorrow morning. For its part, the Rajya Sabha awaited the outcome of efforts launched by the Speaker.

In continuing semantic twists, there was apparent agreement on the Hindi word 'ninda' to describe the U.S. action, but difference on translating it as 'deplore' or 'condemn' into English. Though the draft resolution did not name the United States, BJP sources said the Government was willing to amend it in order to refer to the U.S.

The Government draft reportedly deplores the situation arising out of the armed action by the "coalition forces" against Iraq. In the place of coalition forces, the Government is said to be willing to use "U.S.-led or U.S. and Britain".

There were also differences on "withdrawal of troops" from Iraq as demanded by the Opposition and the cessation of hostilities contained in the official draft. The draft reportedly referred to the great human suffering in Iraq and pointed out that military action was without U.N. sanction and not in conformity with the U.N. Charter.

BJP sources also claimed that they were willing to use a "stronger language" than what was contained in a "no-day-yet-named resolution" admitted in the name of Pranab Mukherjee, senior Congress leader in the Rajya Sabha.

Earlier, the U.S.-led aggression against Iraq came in for all-round condemnation, including by the BJP, in the Lok Sabha, this morning. Several Opposition MPs had served notice for adjournment of business and question hour, prompting the Speaker to allow a short discussion. After the discussion, the House was adjourned thrice to allow the two sides to reconcile their differing positions on the resolution.

Speaking on the issue, Opposition mem-

bers Somyath Chatterjee, Priyaranjan Dasgupta, Ramvilas Paswan, G.M. Banatwala and Surdarsana Nachiapana condemned the U.S.-led invasion and accused the Government of losing its voice on the issue and in the process making itself almost irrelevant.

The Rajya Sabha witnessed five adjournments between 11.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m., when the House finally adjourned for tomorrow. Barring the tabling of some reports, the House did not transact any business with the Opposition insisting on a resolution.

A determined Opposition raised the issue as soon as the House assembled this morning, demanding suspension of question hour, and taking up of the Iraq issue for discussion.

The Congress leader, K. Natwar Singh, said the situation was grave and even the U.N. resolution did refer to a regime change. He also objected to the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell's statement that after Iraq, Washington would turn its attention to India, Pakistan and Kashmir.

Mr. Mukherjee said the discussion could be held either on the Government resolution or the one moved by him. Several Opposition leaders, including Laboo Prasad Yadav and Left members, demanded that the resolution contain condemnation of the U.S.-led war on Iraq.

THE HINDU

Resolution calls for end to war

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, APRIL 8. After prolonged behind-the-scenes negotiations, the Lok Sabha today passed a resolution unanimously, calling for an immediate end to the war against Iraq and demanded a quick withdrawal of the 'coalition' troops.

A compromise was facilitated with the Hindi resolution using the word '*ninda*' to describe the military action against Iraq by the American-led coalition forces. While some pundits said '*ninda*' translated into "deplore", others felt it meant "condemn".

Expressing "national sentiments", the resolution said military action with a view to changing the regime in Iraq was "not acceptable". The war was launched without the permission of the U.N. The Lok Sabha also demanded that the reconstruction of Iraq take place under U.N. supervision and that it ensured the sovereignty of Iraq. It said that the suffering of innocent people, especially women and children, was a grave humanitarian problem. The House expressed deep sympathy for the Iraqi people. It referred to the immediate aid of Rs. 100 crores that had been announced by India and spoke of providing further assistance.

Given the fact that earlier official statements spoke of disarmament tasks for Iraq as well, the resolution reflects a certain hardening of attitude on the part of the Government and an obvious effort to deflect Opposition criticism.

Responding to the fears expressed by members on India being a possible U.S. target, the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, said that "anybody seeking to subdue the country was living in a dream land". A billion-strong country couldn't be treated lightly. "We are a confident nation,

and a democracy, no power can subdue us".

The country's foreign policy, Mr. Sinha said, would continue to be guided by pragmatism and the national interest and India would continue to be the voice of reason and morality. Despite the resolution, the country wanted its ties to flourish with the U.S. as, indeed, with the Arab world. "Relations between countries are not based on a single issue," he said.

Earlier, the Lok Sabha was adjourned twice to enable the floor leaders from both sides to agree on the wording of the resolution. The Lok Sabha Speaker, Manohar Joshi, played a significant role in facilitating the unanimous resolution. Behind closed doors in his chamber, Mr. Joshi nudged the two sides till they finally agreed to the resolution.

When the House met this morning, the Opposition appeared to have hardened its position by insisting on using the word "*ghor ninda*" (strongly deplore/condemn) a proposition which the Government found unacceptable.

The House was adjourned twice as the Speaker sought to get the two sides to agree to a final version. The breakthrough came during the second round of negotiations in the Speaker's chamber around lunch time.

The Opposition indicated its willingness to drop the word "*ghor ninda*" provided the Government accepted its formulation on the withdrawal of troops and an immediate end to the war. The agreement, however, was held up because it had to be carried to the Prime Minister for approval. Mr. Vajpayee gave his nod around 2 p.m., just as the House was to meet after the second adjournment.

They rose as one man:
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THE HINDU

raq war unjustified: George

ST-1874

MAN NEWS SERVICE

TA, April 12. — war on Iraq is unbearable. That's what George Fernandes, defence minister DA convener, said and, of course, mincing words. ing at the inauguration of the Mer-

Chamber of Commerce, Mr Fernandes said the Bush administration for having the war without reasons and stop- ort of describing it adopting double rds, vis-a-vis its agness to rein in n. Islamabad, de- eing a sponsor of sm, hasn't been out the treatment iq has got. defence minister dia should cooper- post-war recon-

struction of Iraq. He expressed concern for the Iraqis who, he said, had borne the brunt of attacks for the past 12 years. "Who says the war is just 25 or 30 days old? It has been going on since 1991. Isn't it that sanctions had been imposed on Iraq several years ago? Isn't it that Iraqi planes had been asked not to transgress airspace defined by the USA. It appears that might is right."

There's no doubt that Mr Fernandes's remarks would be music to Marxist ears, particularly so because the minister said that the plea on which the USA declared the war on Iraq was unacceptable.

Mr Biman Bose, Left Front chairman, had said recently that all chemical and biological weapons in Iraq had been destroyed between 1994 and 1995.

Mr Fernandes too questioned the USA's justification of the war. "Where are weapons of mass destruction in Iraq? ... What will be America's answer? What cannot be glossed over is the USA's gradual shifting of stand. They started the war by saying that WMD should be destroyed and the world saved from deadly weapons. Now they are saying that Iraq should be saved from an authoritarian despot. I find it wholly unjustified." Should India resume bilateral talks with Pakistan? Mr Fernandes said ground-level preparations should be a prelude to such talks.

In his welcome address Mr Sunil Kanoria, Merchants' Chamber of Commerce president, stressed on the need for public-private participation in key sectors of the economy.



Mr George Fernandes and Mr Tapan Sikdar at the AGM of the Merchants' Chamber of Commerce in Kolkata on Saturday. — The Statesman

Govt relieved at end of Iraq war

Swraj Thapa
NEW DELHI 13 APRIL

1911
AS New Delhi cautiously watches the developments in Iraq, a clear sense of relief is palpable in the government over the early end to the war after the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in Baghdad.

An expression of this feeling of relief came from none other than Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee himself who, while addressing a public rally in Gangtok on Sunday, said: "It is good that the war in Iraq has ended, paving the way for peace and development." The fact that not many are grieving the demise of the Saddam regime in Iraq — as the images on TV seem to indicate — has certainly eased the tension of the government. A lingering of the war would undoubtedly have resulted in increased pressure on the Vajpayee government to take a more hawkish stand against the US attack.

In fact, the government's calculations were upset by the Parliament resolution of last week criticising the American attack on Iraq. The move was forced by the impetuosity of the Left and other US bashers. The Vajpayee establishment, in pursuance of its "middle path" policy, had been unwilling to come out openly against America. This stand was primarily based on some key assessments.

First, there had been no doubt in the government's (or anyone's) mind that the US would win the war. The lure of millions of dollars in contracts in the post-war reconstruction of Iraq also played a role in shaping the government's stand, with clear indications that New Delhi did not want to be left out of the "rebuilding" loop this time.

After the last war, Saddam Hussein got a bear hug from then Prime Minister I.K. Gujral, as a result of which India did not get even a single contract in the reconstruction of Kuwait.

But most important, India did not want to break away from its engagement of the US, which it has been shaping by going in for a key shift in approach over the last couple of years. It has been recognised by the government that having the US on its side was advantageous in the context of its dealings with Pakistan.

Indeed, the parliamentary resolution came in for severe criticism from foreign policy experts. Former foreign secretary G. Parthasarathy contended that the move would prove counter-productive. "We have shot ourselves on the foot by adopting the resolution, that too at a very late stage," he said.

"What was the need for us to condemn the American attack when nine out of 10 neighbouring countries of Iraq support the Americans?"

Iraq reconstruction: India opens diplomatic door, aid on the way

PRANAB DHAL SAMANTA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 13

INDIA is understood to have established informal contacts with the US administrators implementing Washington's massive post-war reconstruction and humanitarian assistance programme in Iraq. The Indian envoy in Kuwait, Swash Pawan Singh, apparently exchanged views on the post-war reconstruction of Iraq with Barbara Bodine, a former diplomat who has been appointed head of the interim civil administration in Baghdad.

It is learnt that Bodine informed Singh that the situation in Iraq was far worse than expected. Contrary to earlier US assessments, even a rudimentary administrative infrastructure was missing in the country making it increasingly difficult for Washington to start its rehabilitation exercise. During her discussions with Singh, Bodine pointed out that in the absence of an administrative framework, US officials would have to begin from the scratch making it an enormous task.

Bodine, who was the US ambas-

sador to Yemen when USS Cole was bombed at Aden harbour, is to head the post-war civil administration in central Iraq while US military officials will hold fort in northern and southern parts of the country. The US has already announced that former US Army Gen. Jay Garner will be in-charge of the Pentagon's Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance.

India, however, has decided that

it will route its humanitarian aid to Iraq through the United Nations and the International Committee of Red Cross. At a

meeting of the Crisis Management Group on Saturday, the task of coordinating the Indian aid was apportioned among Ministry of External Affairs officials. Joint Secretary (Gulf) Rajiv Mitter was entrusted with the dispersal of 50,000 metric tonne wheat through UN agencies based in the region while Joint Secretary (NRI) R Dayakar will arrange for medical supplies to reach Iraqis through the International Committee of Red Cross. It is understood that these MEA officials will reach Baghdad

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INDIAN EXPRESS

India should take a moral stand against the Iraq war

Stand up for your rights

BY ARJUN SENGUPTA

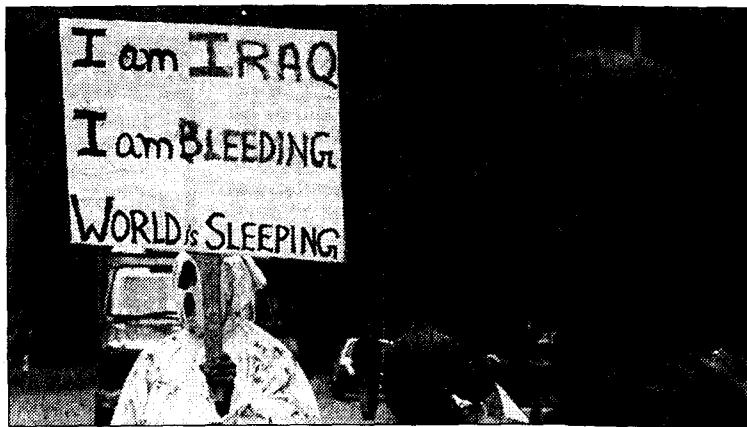
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THE IRAQ war has brought into focus some major moral issues. Every day we saw buildings and residences being blasted, innocent civilians screaming in pain, shouting and protesting against the invaders, who, in turn, claimed that this was being done to free the Iraqis. Saddam Hussein was a cruel dictator but nobody should forget that he was in Iraq because the same super-powers now invading the country put him there. The chemical wars on the Kurds were perpetrated at a time when Saddam was a close ally of the US. The Iraqi people paid for his installation. They are again paying for his ouster.

Lofty principles like freedom, democracy and human rights were touted as reasons for the campaign. However, hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to virtue. The fact that these principles were invoked to garner public support shows that the moral values they reflect have an appeal in western democracies. The real motives for the attack, however, were possibly just the desire to exercise power and dominate the Middle East. After all, if the Iraqis fell in line with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the international oil economy would be under control of the West. But, obviously, these reasons could not be used to gather support for the war.

Even the argument that Iraq was fuelling terrorism did not hold, as few believed that Iraq had any connections with Al-Qaeda and that defeating Iraq would defeat terrorism. The claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction was credible to many, until UN inspectors kept reporting their inability to find them. Even if the WMD were well hidden, Iraq could not possibly be more dangerous than many of the other countries possessing them. This, surely, was no justification for attacking Iraq.

So, the pretext for war gradually changed from real-politick to moral principles. Officially, the US wanted a regime change because Saddam was a dictator who'd denied his people their rights and freedom and championed the cause of terrorism. There was no need for them to seek UN approval. The US, a world leader, had the responsibility to ensure its own security and freedom. If the UN agreed to the strike, well and good. If not, the US could take pre-emptive action, because a threat to world security was a



IT'S ALSO A MORALITY STORY: Anti-war protestor in Srinagar

threat to itself.

It is important to understand this process of legitimisation by the US, because no president could have launched a war without a mandate from the Congress and without public support. The policies could be made by an oligarchy. But they had to be sold to the public, in the idioms of moral arguments acceptable to them.

In the beginning, almost 50 per cent of public opinion in the US was against the war. The situation changed later, through appeals to patriotism and through intense campaigning in the name of democracy and human rights. Many Americans were faced with a moral dilemma. They disapproved of the real motive or liberal credentials of the present government, but they could not accept Saddam's rule in Iraq, any more than they could the rule of Milosevic or other dictators. Some 14,000 writers, academics and intellectuals published a petition against the war. But there were liberals like Michael Ignatieff of Harvard who said that overthrowing Saddam by force was not morally unjustified because of the immorality of the Saddam regime. Bernard Kuchnair, the founder of 'Medicines without Frontiers', observed that the Saddam regime should have been overthrown in 1991 itself, but the fact that a wrong was done earlier did not justify opposing a right that was being done now.

These people missed the real point why the war was waged. Human rights violations by Saddam were just an excuse given by a government which does not hesitate to support dictators or ignore human rights violations by those rulers

who are its allies. How can one be sure that another dictator will not be installed in place of Saddam, one who will be more pliable? How does one know that terrorism exported by that ruler will not be overlooked by the Americans, if that helps in the next battle against Iran or Syria or Palestine? The human rights argument does not allow for war to restore democracy and freedom in another country, except as the very last resort. Ends do not justify means. Indeed, sticking to the right means is often more important. That is why a rule of law cannot be ignored even if it allows some guilty agents to escape the legal net. Democracy is desirable even if it does not always produce the best government.

Millions of people came out on the streets in most cities of the world to reject the hypocrisy of such a moral argument. They would not support Saddam but would not accept the US right to unilateral pre-emptive action or the US claim to custodianship of world freedom or security. It is here that India could have played a major role. The largest democracy in the world, India has championed the cause of freedom ever since its independence. It has fought terrorism against all odds. Its legal and constitutional systems uphold human rights no less than any country, including the US and Britain. So, India has the bona fide and the moral stance to say clearly, and unequivocally, that the Anglo-American justification of the Iraq war is wrong, that they have perpetrated the worst violation of human rights in the name of securing freedom for the Iraqis, that they have

flouted the basic tenets of international law by their unilateral action, that a fight against dictatorship and terrorism has to be universal and cannot be pursued selectively to serve narrow political or economic interests.

Indeed, the world has come to expect India to play that role. India has not been a major military power and, not until recently, a strong economic power. Still, it is recognised as a major player in international politics because it has upheld moral principles, even during its fight for national independence. This inspired many small nations to unite and assert themselves. Power is meant to influence and India has long been a power to reckon with in that respect.

Today, our potential for exercising that power is greater, because we are now also a strong economy and we cannot be pushed around. If we take a moral stand, no one can penalise us by withdrawing aid or investment or preventing trade or transactions. Americans do business with us because they profit from it and they will continue to do so if our economy remains buoyant. Large sections of the American public would also agree with our stand. Criticising the American government would not make us anti-Americans.

However, citing national interest, India decided to lie low and make feeble noises that were hardly noticed in the world. It is vulgar to think our national interest is now reduced to procuring a few million dollars' worth of contracts for the post-war reconstruction. Foreign policy is surely meant to serve national interest, but that national interest is reckoned in terms of our national pride and independence, in not bowing to pressure and in our ability to influence other people's behaviour by championing a moral stand. For that, we do not have to give out empty threats of taking pre-emptive actions against adversaries. We just have to stand firm on our principles.

On Iraq, those principles demanded that we speak out in all international fora, opposing dictatorship and terrorism wherever and whenever they came up and upholding the principles of international law exercised through the UN. If we could galvanise world opinion it would surely serve our national interest.

WS 45. per m

India ready to work with U.S., U.N. on Iraq

By C. Raja Mohan

98 pages
NO. 11
15/4/03

NEW DELHI, APRIL 17. Signalling a more activist approach to the challenges in post-war Iraq, India today said that it was ready to work with the United States and the international community in restoring peace and launching reconstruction in the Gulf nation.

If the parliamentary thunder on Iraq in the dying moments of the Saddam Hussein regime used Indian policy in knots, the Government is now trying to pick up the threads and find ways to regain the political initiative.

During an interaction with the visiting American Congressmen and their staff at the Confederation of Indian Industry here, the Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal, pointed to the deep divisions created across the world by the war in Iraq. India shared with the U.S. the objective of Iraqi disarmament

but had a different view on how it should be achieved, he said. Underlining the importance of putting aside past differences, Mr. Sibal focussed on the urgency of developing a common approach to peace and reconstruction in Iraq.

"India is ready to join hands with the U.S. and the international community" in achieving these objectives, Mr. Sibal said. His remarks have gone the farthest in suggesting that India is now ready to end the stasis in its Iraq policy.

As the United Nations begins the debate on lifting sanctions against Iraq, Mr. Sibal hoped that the Anglo-American powers, on the one hand, and France, Russia and Germany, on the other, would work together "to open the door for an early delivery of aid" to the long suffering people in Iraq. Mr. Sibal said that India was engaged in a "detailed exercise on how we can contribute" to the humanitarian effort in Iraq. It was in

touch with a variety of international organisations that could facilitate this.

While analysts here note the signs of a more positive Indian approach towards a post-war Iraq, they suggest that New Delhi remains somewhat timid and tentative. They argue that India has no reason to limit itself to a narrow band of humanitarian assistance and could look boldly at a wider intervention ranging from building Iraqi civil society to the creation of new armed forces.

It is also being pointed out that India's stress on "multilateral" peace and reconstruction might be detracting from the immediate contributions India could make towards the regeneration of Iraq.

On his part, Mr. Sibal was upbeat on the new Iraq calling it "a great country, with a great future". Endowed with oil, water and a talented people, it could become a powerful force in the Middle East, he said.

18 APR 2003

India ready to work with U.S., U.N. on Iraq

By C. Raja Mohan

Q. & A. 10-11-03

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18 APR 2003

DEE HINDO

Sinha salve on ties with America

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 23: External affairs minister Yashwant Sinha today rejected the Opposition's charge that the US was dictating the government's foreign policy but made it clear that "compulsive hostility" towards Washington will not suit the country's national interests.

"India does not act under pressure from any country and we will not be cowed down," he said in the Lok Sabha while replying to a debate on demands for grants of the external affairs ministry which was later adopted by voice vote.

Opposition parties had accused the government of succumbing to pressure from the US and allowing its foreign policy to be directed from outside.

The charge drew an immediate response from BJP member A.K. Swain, who said: "It is in our own interest to be on the right side of history, that means right side of the US."

Sinha, too, reacted along the

same lines. "Without compromising on anything... national interest and principles, if we can build a great relationship with the US, we will try and do so. Compulsive hostility to the US is a baggage we should leave behind," he said. "This is not suited to our national interest."

Sinha's statement stood out in sharp contrast to the mood in Parliament when it had adopted a resolution "deplor-

ing" the war on Iraq on the day Baghdad fell.

The resolution, perceived to be ill-timed by some analysts, also came under assault from Swain. The BJP member said people considered it a resolution of "national irrelevance" and not "national sentiment".

The comment evoked a sharp reaction from Congress and CPM members who said the BJP was insulting the

House. Congress member Margaret Alva, who was in the chair, pointed out that Swain himself had backed the unanimous resolution as a member of the House.

Sinha announced that Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee would visit China "soon". The dates are being worked out. The Prime Minister would also visit Russia around end-May, Sinha added.

24 APR 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

We have chosen the middle path after much thought: Sinha

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, APRIL 19. The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, said today that there was "neither a need to panic" over the possible United States intervention in India's affairs nor should there be a concern that relations with Washington were on the "verge of collapse".

Delivering the Rajendra Mathur memorial lecture organised by the Editors Guild of India, Mr. Sinha took a nuanced view of the Indo-U.S. dynamic: "India cannot remain silent simply out of fear of incurring the displeasure of others and India-U.S. relations should not be viewed through the prism of only one issue."

Several objective factors had brought India and the U.S. closer. New Delhi, he said, had adopted the "middle path" on an issue such as Iraq with considerable deliberation. "There are some in our country who believe that India should have been in the trenches fighting the U.S. and the U.K. with the Republican Guards of Saddam Hussein. There are others who would like us to be a vassal State and to subjugate our thought and action to the rich and powerful."

India, Mr. Sinha said, would go to neither extreme, continuing to balance national interest with principle. "Neither will we sell our souls to others nor will we pursue blindly antagonistic policies for the sake of antagonism."

The war on Iraq, he

maintained, had led to the creation of a "new reality" in West Asia. "It is still too premature for firm conclusions to be drawn as to the direction of future events..." Mr. Sinha was clear that pre-Iraq or post-Iraq, India's pre-eminent concern and challenge remained the menace of terrorism. He claimed that terrorism had become an instrument of war by other means; an instrument of revenge. "What some countries and groups are unable to obtain through peaceful and democratic means is sought to be grabbed through the systematic and deliberate use of terror as an instrument of policy...this is the reason why the term proxy war is most appropriate to describe the policy of cross-border terrorism being sponsored by our neighbour (Pakistan)." Arguing that there could be no ambivalence on the question of use of violence, Mr. Sinha continued to refer to the double standards in the international battle against terrorism. "Much has been said in this regard and I have no desire to point fingers or cast blame in any direction". Without naming anyone, he said: "... As is evident, there is a tendency amongst some to condone terrorism in some places while condemning it elsewhere. This is completely counter-productive. Such lenience will only boomerang on everyone."

Arguing that terrorism has often turned on its mentors, he stated that it was only when terrorism "struck close to home" that "many in the

world" realised they should have woken up earlier and "before they became a victim". India, however, had been facing this danger for over two decades. "Similarly, our views may today (on Pakistan and its role?) meet with some opposition based on short-term expediency. But, we have a responsibility to continue to express the truth as we see it and also meet the challenge facing us."

In implicit criticism of those who felt that Pakistan played a stellar role in the war against terrorism, he said that "compartmentalised national approaches" could not deal with terrorism and its linkages. "No region or country is insulated; neither distance, power nor wealth provides immunity." And, terrorism's "most egregious" manifestations were found in India's neighbourhood. "We owe it to ourselves as well as to the world to push, prod, persuade and mobilise the international community into redoubling efforts aimed at eradicating the phenomenon of terrorism from its very roots."

"It is particularly important for us in India to speak out... in a loud and clear manner. What we may have to say may not be palatable to some. Criticism and opposition may come our way. We must, however, continue to speak out." And, on the issue of terrorism, which impinged on the very core of India's security, "India would remain steadfast and single-minded in the pursuit of her national interests," he added.

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18/4

India's first SARS case found in Goa

Miscellaneous

By Aarti Dhar

NEW DELHI, APRIL 17. The first confirmed case of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in the country has been reported from Goa, with a 32-year-old marine engineer testing positive for the deadly disease.

The patient, who sailed from Hong Kong to Mumbai, reached Goa on April 1 and has been readmitted to the Goa Medical College Hospital from where he was discharged on April 14. He has been quarantined though he is asymptomatic now and is not infective anymore. The case has been confirmed by the Director-General of the Indian Council of Medical Research.

The Union Health Minister, Sushma Swaraj, reviewed the situation here today after the patient's blood, urine and sputum sample report was made available by the Pune-based National Institute of Virology late last evening. The person tested positive for the SARS causing corona virus and he had been brought back to the hospital, the Director-General of Health Services, S.P. Aggarwal, told reporters here today.

However, the patient's family, including his wife and father, who had travelled with

him to Hong Kong, did not show symptoms of the disease. They had been asked to decrease their contact with him, as also their social and business interaction, Dr. Aggarwal said.

The medical and paramedical staff who had attended on the patient have been advised home-quarantine as a precautionary measure. The country was fully prepared to tackle the disease. Two senior Joint Directors of the National Institute of Communicable

Diseases (NICD) in Delhi have left for Pune to investigate the case, he said.

Meanwhile, an Australian, who landed here last night, was admitted to the RML Hospital with SARS-like symptoms of fever, cough and mild shortness of breath today.

Dr. Aggarwal said the Goa patient, along with his family, had stopped over at Hong Kong for four hours on March 26 from where they went to Singapore. They then sailed to Mumbai, arriving there on April 1. After staying there for a couple of days, they left for Goa, where the patient developed fever and cough. He went to see a private physician on April 8, who referred him to the Goa Medical College Hospital. Neither did his chest X-ray show any patches of thoracic-pneumonia nor did he have fever.

Dr. Aggarwal said the patient was hospitalised on April 10 and after a couple of days he was discharged.

He had responded to normal antibiotic therapy and was absolutely fine, though he was advised "home-quarantine". His blood, sputum and urine samples were sent for testing on April 14. The laboratory report showed he was positive for the SARS virus.

CM for second opinion

PANAJI, APRIL 17. As Goa reported the first confirmed case of SARS in India, the Chief Minister, Manohar Parrikar, said at a press meet later in the day that the blood and other samples of the patient would be sent to National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) tomorrow for a second opinion.

"The blood, serum, throat swab and urine samples of the 32-year-old marine engineer will be sent to the NICD tomorrow for a second opinion," Mr. Parrikar said at the hurriedly-called press conference here. — PTI

20 APR 2003

18 APR 2003

THE HINDU

After China, Fernandes warms up to Japan

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, APRIL 29. Within days of returning from a rare visit to China, the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, is hosting his counterpart from Japan. In a development reflecting the changing dynamics of the Asian balance of power, the Japanese Minister will be in India for the first time ever this weekend.

Shigeru Ishiba is officially designated as the Director-General of the Japanese Defence Agency.

Reflecting the political ambiguities of its peace constitution, Japan does not have a defence ministry but only a "Defence Agency". But for all practical purposes Mr. Ishiba is the Defence Minister of Japan.

Mr. Ishiba will arrive here on Saturday and have talks with Mr. Fernandes the next day. The visit signals the political commitment in both countries to expand and deepen dialogue on defence and security matters.

For decades, India with its pro-Soviet and Third World orientation largely cut itself out of the geopolitics of East Asia. But in the last few years it has been exploring rather cautiously the prospects of a defence engagement with all the key players in the region, including Japan and South Korea.

Mr. Fernandes was the first Defence Minister to visit Japan in 2000 and travelled there again last year. There have been some defence exchanges for a while with Japan particularly in maritime security.

When the Japanese Foreign Minister, Yoriko Kawaguchi, visited India in January, she imparted a strategic dimension to ties between the two countries. For the first time in decades, a defence component was finally being added to the agenda of Indo-Japanese cooperation.

Pointing to the long standing U.S.-Japan military alliance and the growing Indo-U.S. defence cooperation, Ms. Kawaguchi said that "achieving ever-closer cooperation on the security and defence front is crucial for both Japan and India".

"Cooperative maintenance of the security of maritime traffic in the sea-lanes that stretch across the Indian Ocean and the Straits of Malacca are among the security and defence issues,

which deserve our increased attention. Both countries share common interests and concerns regarding these issues", she said.

While Ms. Kawaguchi did not spell out what the rest of the shared agenda was, it is not difficult to figure out — China, North Korea and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and missiles.

India and Japan, as wary neighbours of a rising China, have great interest in exchanging thoughts on where Beijing's military modernisation and security philosophy are headed.

Mr. Ishiba would surely want to hear first-hand the impressions of Mr. Fernandes' recent trip to China.

The two sides also have a lot to discuss about the strategic nexus between Pakistan and North Korea which has integrated the security environments of the subcontinent and East Asia.

Pakistan's clandestine transfer of nuclear weapons technology to North Korea in return for the supply of long-range missiles has at once undermined the security of both New Delhi and Tokyo.

While the Japanese Foreign Office is mealy-mouthed in talking about nuclear and missile cooperation between Islamabad and Pyongyang, Mr. Ishiba, with responsibility for Japanese defence, must be expected to be more forthcoming on the common threat of proliferation faced by New Delhi and Tokyo.

As they confront missile proliferation in their neighbourhood, India and Japan have a common stake in defending themselves against it.

Both countries support the U.S. missile defence initiative, but there are a number of obstacles before New Delhi and Tokyo can cooperate on the subject.

But they can begin to debate the political issues relating to missile defence and nuclear proliferation in an intensive manner.

Ensuring the supply of oil from the Persian Gulf at reasonable prices and the security of sea lines of communication in the Indian Ocean are naturally at the top the expanding strategic cooperation between India and Japan.

The two sides are also expected to exchange views on the latest developments in Indo-Pak relations and Iraq.

Iraq reconstruction: India opens diplomatic door, aid on the way

PRANAB DHAL SAMANTA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 13

INDIA is understood to have established informal contacts with the US administrators implementing Washington's massive post-war reconstruction and humanitarian assistance programme in Iraq. The Indian envoy in Kuwait, Swash Pawan Singh, apparently exchanged views on the post-war reconstruction of Iraq with Barbara Bodine, a former diplomat who has been appointed head of the interim civil administration in Baghdad.

It is learnt that Bodine informed Singh that the situation in Iraq was far worse than expected. Contrary to earlier US assessments, even a rudimentary administrative infrastructure was missing in the country making it increasingly difficult for Washington to start its rehabilitation exercise. During her discussions with Singh, Bodine pointed out that in the absence of an administrative framework, US officials would have to begin from the scratch making it an enormous task.

Bodine, who was the US ambas-

sador to Yemen when *USS Cole* was bombed at Aden harbour, is to head the post-war civil administration in central Iraq while US military officials will hold fort in northern and southern parts of the country. The US has already announced that former US Army Gen. Jay Garner will be in-charge of the Pentagon's Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance.

India, however, has decided that it will route its humanitarian aid to Iraq through the United Nations and the International Committee of Red Cross. At a meeting of the Crisis Management Group on Saturday, the task of coordinating the Indian aid was apportioned among Ministry of External Affairs officials. Joint Secretary (Gulf) Rajiv Mitter was entrusted with the dispersal of 50,000 metric tonne wheat through UN agencies based in the region while Joint Secretary (NRI) R Dayakar will arrange for medical supplies to reach Iraqis through the International Committee of Red Cross. It is understood that these MEA officials will reach Baghdad

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14 APR 2004

Govt relieved at end of Iraq war

Swraj Thapa

NEW DELHI 13 APRIL

AS New Delhi cautiously watches the developments in Iraq, a clear sense of relief is palpable in the government over the early end to the war after the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in Baghdad.

An expression of this feeling of relief came from none other than Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee himself who, while addressing a public rally in Gangtok on Sunday, said: "It is good that the war in Iraq has ended, paving the way for peace and development." The fact that not many are grieving the demise of the Saddam regime in Iraq — as the images on TV seem to indicate — has certainly eased the tension of the government. A lingering of the war would undoubtedly have resulted in increased pressure on the Vajpayee government to take a more hawkish stand against the US attack.

In fact, the government's calculations were upset by the Parliament resolution of last week criticising the American attack on Iraq. The move was forced by the impetuosity of the Left and other US bashers. The Vajpayee establishment, in pursuance of its "middle path" policy, had been unwilling to come out openly against America. This stand was primarily based on some key assessments.

First, there had been no doubt in the government's (or anyone's) mind that the US would win the war. The lure of millions of dollars in contracts in the post-war reconstruction of Iraq also played a role in shaping the government's stand, with clear indications that New Delhi did not want to be left out of the "rebuilding" loop this time.

After the last war, Saddam Hussein got a bear hug from then Prime Minister I.K. Gujral, as a result of which India did not get even a single contract in the reconstruction of Kuwait.

But most important, India did not want to break away from its engagement of the US, which it has been shaping by going in for a key shift in approach over the last couple of years. It has been recognised by the government that having the US on its side was advantageous in the context of its dealings with Pakistan.

Indeed, the parliamentary resolution came in for severe criticism from foreign policy experts. Former foreign secretary G. Parthasarathy contended that the move would prove counter-productive. "We have shot ourselves on the foot by adopting the resolution, that too at a very late stage," he said.

"What was the need for us to condemn the American attack when nine out of 10 neighbouring countries of Iraq support the Americans?"

14 APR 2003

The Economic Times

After China, Fernandes warms up to Japan

By C. Raja Mohan

9-8 Pains

NEW DELHI, APRIL 29. Within days of returning from a rare visit to China, the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, is hosting his counterpart from Japan. In a development reflecting the changing dynamics of the Asian balance of power, the Japanese Minister will be in India for the first time ever this weekend.

Shigeru Ishiba is officially designated as the Director-General of the Japanese Defence Agency.

Reflecting the political ambiguities of its peace constitution, Japan does not have a defence ministry but only a "Defence Agency". But for all practical purposes Mr. Ishiba is the Defence Minister of Japan.

Mr. Ishiba will arrive here on Saturday and have talks with Mr. Fernandes the next day. The visit signals the political commitment in both countries to expand and deepen dialogue on defence and security matters.

For decades, India with its pro-Soviet and Third World orientation largely cut itself out of the geopolitics of East Asia. But in the last few years it has been exploring rather cautiously the prospects of a defence engagement with all the key players in the region, including Japan and South Korea.

Mr. Fernandes was the first Defence Minister to visit Japan in 2000 and travelled there again last year. There have been some defence exchanges for a while with Japan particularly in maritime security.

When the Japanese Foreign Minister, Yoriko Kawaguchi, visited India in January, she imparted a strategic dimension to ties between the two countries. For the first time in decades, a defence component was finally being added to the agenda of Indo-Japanese cooperation.

Pointing to the long standing U.S.-Japan military alliance and the growing Indo-U.S. defence cooperation, Ms. Kawaguchi said that "achieving ever-closer cooperation on the security and defence front is crucial for both Japan and India".

"Cooperative maintenance of the security of maritime traffic in the sea-lanes that stretch across the Indian Ocean and the Straits of Malacca are among the security and defence issues,

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which deserve our increased attention. Both countries share common interests and concerns regarding these issues", she said.

While Ms. Kawaguchi did not spell out what the rest of the shared agenda was, it is not difficult to figure out — China, North Korea and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and missiles.

India and Japan, as wary neighbours of a rising China, have great interest in exchanging thoughts on where Beijing's military modernisation and security philosophy are headed.

Mr. Ishiba would surely want to hear first-hand the impressions of Mr. Fernandes' recent trip to China.

The two sides also have a lot to discuss about the strategic nexus between Pakistan and North Korea which has integrated the security environments of the subcontinent and East Asia.

Pakistan's clandestine transfer of nuclear weapons technology to North Korea in return for the supply of long-range missiles has at once undermined the security of both New Delhi and Tokyo.

While the Japanese Foreign Office is mealy-mouthed in talking about nuclear and missile cooperation between Islamabad and Pyongyang, Mr. Ishiba, with responsibility for Japanese defence, must be expected to be more forthcoming on the common threat of proliferation faced by New Delhi and Tokyo.

As they confront missile proliferation in their neighbourhood, India and Japan have a common stake in defending themselves against it.

Both countries support the U.S. missile defence initiative, but there are a number of obstacles before New Delhi and Tokyo can cooperate on the subject.

But they can begin to debate the political issues relating to missile defence and nuclear proliferation in an intensive manner.

Ensuring the supply of oil from the Persian Gulf at reasonable prices and the security of sea lines of communication in the Indian Ocean are naturally at the top the expanding strategic cooperation between India and Japan.

The two sides are also expected to exchange views on the latest developments in Indo-Pak relations and Iraq.

30 APR 2001
THE HINDU

Compulsive anti-US stand not in India's interest: Sinha

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 23 APRIL

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XTERNAL affairs minister Yashwant Sinha on Wednesday said "compulsive hostility" towards Washington didn't suit India's national interest even as he dismissed the Opposition charge that the government was acting under US pressure on the foreign policy front.

Outlining the broad contours of the Atal Behari Vajpayee-led government's foreign policy, Mr Sinha said: "Without compromising on national interest and principles, if we can build a great relationship with the US, we will try and do so."

In as many words, Mr Sinha made it clear that the erstwhile approach of viewing the US with suspicion would have to be abandoned. "Compulsive hostility to the US is a baggage that we should leave behind," he said. "This is not suited to our national interest," he added. He maintained that India, in the past, had focused on differences with the US. Mr Sinha said this didn't mean India would succumb to pressure from the US. He said the Vajpayee government was



Sinha

building a strong relationship with Washington based more on commonalities, although differences still persisted on some issues, including Iraq.

The minister, while replying to a debate in the Lok Sabha on the demand for grants to the ministry of external affairs, also dwelt on India's growing relationship with China, Russia, the neighbouring countries, the European Union, Africa, Latin America, Central Asia and Japan.

Mr Sinha said India will not be cowed down by pressure. "Did we not carry out our nuclear tests in May 1998 or the missile tests under US pressure?" he asked. The Opposition had accused the government of succumbing to US pressure. "You are not directing your policy. Someone else far away is directing you," Congress member R.L. Bhatia said. The Opposition had wanted to know the government's stand on Pakistan, contending that there had been conflicting signals in the last few days. Mr Bhatia pointed to the statements of the external affairs and defence ministers, who said Pakistan could be a "fit case" for pre-emptive strikes, while the Prime Minister had extended olive branch to its neighbour.

24 APR 2003

The Economic Times

India and Iran stand for democratic Iraq

Dubai: India and Iran have advocated the need for the establishment of a democratically elected government in Iraq and shared the perception that the US-led coalition forces should leave Iraq "as soon as possible".

"India and Iran shared the view that a government elected on the basis of 'one man one vote' should be installed in Iraq. It was also felt that only the barest minimum number of US coalition forces should be retained in Iraq," Indian envoy Pripuran Singh said after a meeting of the national security advisor Brajesh Mishra and Iranian President Mohammad Khatami on Saturday.

"The two sides agreed that

the US presence in Iraq was a reality but the forces should leave Iraq as soon as possible," Mr Singh said here on Sunday.

During the meeting, Iran did not raise the Kashmir issue but Mr Mishra briefed Mr Khatami about the recent visit of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Kashmir where he made an offer of peace talks with Pakistan.

Mr Mishra who was accompanied by Arun Singh, joint director, ministry of external affairs, later left for Kabul on his way to Delhi.

Mr Singh said Mr Mishra's visit was on the invitation of Dr Hassan Rowhani, secretary, Supreme National Security Council of Iran who had come to India last year. Mr Mishra

held discussions with Dr Rowhani and foreign minister Kamal Kharrazzi on commercial and strategic issues.

Referring to Iran and India's assistance to Afghanistan in its reconstruction Mr Khatami said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran will seriously pursue the implementation of various industrial and economic projects in Afghanistan."

Mr Mishra said, "Tehran and New Delhi will pursue the finalisation of the agreements reached during the state visit of President Khatami to India, and the Indian President to Iran, and that will boost the two countries' relations to an unprecedented high level." PTI

Chile, Africa new diplomatic hotspots

Niloya Roy Chaudhury in New Delhi

April 28. — Some distant South American and African countries have suddenly become very important for foreign policy priorities for India. The reason? Pakistan.

The just concluded visit by Chilean foreign minister Ms Maria Soledad Alvear was crucial, say foreign ministry officials, because Chile will become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council next year, where its voice could be used to counter Pakistan's "persistently hostile statements" against India. Pakistan assumed a place as a non-permanent member of the UNSC this year and has considerable potential to publicly denigrate India from that forum.

India's active wooing of Chile, which publicly supports a seat for India as a permanent member of an expanded UNSC

(whenever that happens), falls in line with its stated policy of not allowing Pakistan to raise uncomfortable allegations against India at international forums.

Ms Alvear met Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee. She held talks with Mr Yashwant Sinha and signed three agreements. She also met commerce minister Mr Arun Jaitley and discussed prospects for developing a preferential trading agreement between the two countries. India and Chile issued a joint statement outlining all these issues at the end of her four day visit to this country.

Similarly, the crucial part of Mr Yashwant Sinha's Africa tour this weekend (he visited Botswana, Tanzania and Zanzibar) was the visit to Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, currently head of the Commonwealth ministerial action group (CMAG). Pakistan's case for readmission to the

Commonwealth (it was suspended in 1999 after the elected government of Mr Nawaz Sharif was overthrown in an army coup by General Pervez Musharraf) is due to be heard next month (in May) and Botswana, as head of the CMAG, would carry an important voice in the final decision.

A great deal of India's foreign policy efforts, senior officials said, are targeted towards trying to ensure that Pakistan does not get a headway over this country in various international forums. Other than keeping key interlocutors informed of various aspects of the role of Pakistan in fomenting terrorist activity against this country, trying to ensure that Pakistan is kept under check in or out of as many international forums as possible is a vital way in which India counters the "proxy war that has been unleashed in this country for close to two decades".

Congress, Left parties welcome peace measures

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 2. Political parties today responded positively to the latest steps announced by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in the direction of improving Indo-Pakistan relations.

Welcoming the move, the BJP spokesman, Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said that during his conversation with Mr. Vajpayee, the Pakistan Prime Minister had condemned terrorism. However, he stressed that the party would prefer that Islamabad take concrete action and not restrict it to words.

He said the latest move was the last chance to establish peace between India and Pakistan and hoped that the latter respond positively to the steps announced by India.

Mr. Malhotra said there were reports even today of infiltration and hoped that Pakistan would see to it that it comes to a stop.

He also welcomed the Prime Minister's statement that there would be no third party mediation. The Congress said the announcements were on expected lines. The party spokesman, Anand Sharma said the party had always held the opinion that diplomatic channels

should be kept open between the two countries.

The CPI general secretary, A.B. Bardhan suggested that India take action step by step towards restoration of normality between New Delhi and Islamabad.

He said the decision of allowing civil flights was necessary since both nations were incurring huge losses.

The CPI(M) said the steps taken to improve ties between the two nations were in the right direction. The party politburo member, Prakash Karat said the CPI(M) had said channels of diplomatic communication and people-to-people contacts should not have been snapped. The latest steps were towards normalisation of relations, he added.

The TDP Parliamentary Party leader, K. Yerrannaudu, welcomed the announcement but said, both infiltration and cross-border terrorism had to stop.

Hope both India, Pak. will move ahead: Hurriyat

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, MAY 2. The All-Party Hurriyat Conference has welcomed the Centre's decision to appoint a new High Commissioner to Pakistan and said there was need to carry forward the peace initiatives to ease tension between the two countries.

The APHC chairman, Abdul Gani Bhat, said here that the time had come to address the bilateral problems, particularly the Kashmir issue, to ensure permanent peace in the region.

"Neither India nor Pakistan can afford the luxury of sleeping over the problems that constitute a potential threat to peace in the region," Prof. Bhat said and hoped that the leaders of the two countries "will rise to the occasion and move forward with a will and with wisdom to achieve peace and ensure prosperity." The Hurriyat had welcomed the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's initiative to extend the hand of friendship to Pakistan but rejected his offer to talk to the Centre's interlocutor, N.N. Vohra.

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9-11-2003
S.P. G.V.

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India, China keen on improving military ties

THE HINDU

3 MAY 2003

Democracy dilemma in London

MS 2 spin
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PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, May 6: India may have to tone down its "lack of democracy" campaign against Pakistan when the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group meets in London later this month.

At the meeting, scheduled for May 19, the group members will decide whether Pakistan and Zimbabwe — both suspended from the Commonwealth councils for lack of democracy in their countries — should be readmitted into the multilateral body.

Till recently, India had been actively campaigning with the other members to ensure that the suspension on Pakistan was not lifted. This continued to be Delhi's policy till late last month when foreign minister Yashwant Sinha travelled to Gabarone to lobby Botswana, the chairman of the group.

But now, after Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's gesture of conciliation to Pakistan, India seems to be in a fix on what stand it should adopt at the London meet. "We will

continue to be pro-active on the issue. However, our tone may not be as shrill as it was in the past," a foreign ministry official said.

Though the remark indicates India's dilemma, South Block mandarins argue that there are no contradictions in India's approach. "Just because we want to normalise relations with Pakistan does not mean that we are not serious about the lack of democracy in that country," said an official. He pointed out that India had invited Pervez Musharraf for the Agra summit, though everybody knew he was responsible for the Kargil war.

A section of the Indian establishment feels Delhi should continue to exert pressure on Pakistan on the democracy issue. "It is a fact that there is no democracy in Pakistan. The general elections held in the country last year have convinced few people in the outside world about its fairness," a foreign ministry official said. But others have made it clear that India's campaign in London meet will be far less strident.

What may work out in India's favour and

save it from active lobbying on the issue is that opinion in the group is divided over the fate of Pakistan and Zimbabwe.

The large-scale violence in Zimbabwe in the wake of Robert Mugabe's land redistribution had led to its suspension from the councils of the Commonwealth. Britain, Canada and Australia feel the suspension should remain. But they are in favour of taking back Pakistan as they feel it has taken the decision to restore democracy by holding the polls.

But South Africa, Nigeria and Botswana are opposed to this view. They argue that though the elections in Zimbabwe may not have been perfect, they were freer than most and that Mugabe has done much more than Musharraf towards restoring democracy.

This lack of consensus could prevent lifting the suspension on both countries. If that happens, Delhi would achieve its goal without actively campaigning for it. But it may find itself in a spot if the majority of the members in the CMAG decide to lift the suspension on Pakistan.

Sonia backs Vajpayee with Agra warning

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9-f. photos

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, May 8: Sonia Gandhi today extended her party's support to Atal Bihari Vajpayee's peace initiative, but warned the Prime Minister against rushing into talks with Pakistan without adequate groundwork so that the "Agra fiasco" is not repeated.

The Congress president asked Vajpayee to specify a time frame for resumption of dialogue with Islamabad.

Though she backed the gesture, Sonia lashed out at what she called the National Democratic Alliance government's lack of "clarity, conviction and consistency" in policies on relations with Pakistan.

She wanted to know if Vajpayee had "enthusiastic and total" backing of the allies, his Cabinet and party colleagues as also "of his own ideological brotherhood".

"We are puzzled and the country awaits an explanation for the inconsistent and contradictory statements by the Prime

Minister, deputy Prime Minister and external affairs minister from time to time on such a vital matter," she said. "We only wish that the BJP-led...government's policies with regard to Pakistan have clarity, conviction and consistency. The government's stance has vacillated from extreme to another giving rise to the impression that we are responding to external pressures."

Sonia, who initiated the debate on Indo-Pak relations in the Lok Sabha, said "in spite of these inconsistencies, we have extended our broad and sustained support to the government on matters relating to national security, cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and Indo-Pak relations".

Sonia wanted to know if the government, which has repeatedly ruled out talks with Pakistan unless cross-border terrorism ends in Kashmir, has got some firm commitments from Islamabad. "Are we to understand that this remains the pre-condition for the resumption of dialogue?" she asked.

She said her party's stand

has been clear. The Congress, she added, has always said the windows of dialogue — official and unofficial, formal and informal — must be kept open at all times on "all issues of mutual concern and interest".

Sonia said the Congress had supported Vajpayee's 1999 Lahore visit, but was realistic enough not to go overboard as the then foreign minister who termed it a "defining moment in Indo-Pak relations".

The "defining moment", she added, was provided by the Kargil war, preparations for which were going on while Vajpayee was being greeted in Lahore.

She also criticised the government for suddenly deciding on the Agra summit in 2001 without a structured agenda. "There is no question of partitioning Jammu and Kashmir," she said.

"That is simply unacceptable. There is also no question of handing over Kashmir.... That, too, is unacceptable. Let us be very clear on what we will not accept. Only then we can move forward."

29 MAY 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

Power of three can end terror, says Mishra

Proposes Indo-US-Israeli axis

By Chidanand Rajghatta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Washington: National security adviser Brajesh Mishra has proposed an alliance of the US, India and Israel, among other democratic countries, to meet the threat of terrorism.

In an address at the American Jewish Community's annual dinner here on Thursday, Mr Mishra said such an alliance would have the political will and moral authority to take bold decisions in extreme cases of terrorist provocation without being distracted by diversionary arguments like root causes.

Preventive measures like blocking financial supplies, disrupting networks, sharing intelligence and simplifying extradition procedures could only be effective through international cooperation based on trust and shared values, he said.

The idea of a Washington-New Delhi-Tel Aviv axis against terror is not new, but it is the first time it is being proposed so openly and formally. While doing so, Mr Mishra spoke of the fundamental similarities among India, the US and Israel, including their democratic systems, sharing a common vision of pluralism, tolerance and equal opportunity.

Stronger India-US relations and India-Israel relations had a natural logic, India's foreign policy principal, who is in Washington for talks with top US officials, told the Jewish movers and

shakers.

Mr Mishra also announced at the dinner that New Delhi hoped to receive Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon soon in India on an official visit.

Mr Mishra's anti-terror proposal came even as US deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage wound up his daylong visit to Pakistan and arrived in New Delhi. Mr Mishra had met Mr Armitage in transit in London before his discussions here on Friday with his US counterpart Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of State Colin Powell. Mr Powell is meeting foreign minister Yashwant Sinha while in transit in Moscow next week as part of the continuing Indo-US dialogue.

From all accounts, the dialogue appears aimed at walking Pakistan back from the path of extremism to a more reasoned approach to issues involving the sub-continent. In interviews with two Pakistani networks and a press conference, Mr Armitage rejected a plethora of Pakistani proposals while praising Islamabad's cooperation in the war on terrorism, leaving his hosts in little doubt about which way Washington was going in the ongoing spat between India and Pakistan on Kashmir.

Among other issues, Mr Armitage said the US had no roadmap to resolve the Kashmir problem, that it was best dealt with bilaterally, and there could not be any artificial time-frame for the resolving the tangle.

US invites India for Iraq effort

Asks for a division-level force to maintain law and order

SHISHIR GUPTA
NEW DELHI | MAY 10

IN A significant development, Washington has invited New Delhi to be a part of the multinational "stabilisation" force that the US is planning to set up in Iraq. South Block sources confirmed that US embassy officials have approached the Government with a plan to send a division-level force (one division has around 9,000 troops) to Iraq for maintaining law and order in the war-torn country.

Government spokesman Navtej Sarna, on his part, has gone on record saying that the MEA had not been approached by the US for troops to Iraq. He was quoted saying that Indian peacekeeping mission could only take place under the UN auspices.

It is learnt that Albert Thibault, Deputy Chief of



US soldiers escorting Iraqis who tried to loot Saddam palace

Mission, and Steve Sbotro, Military Attache at the US Embassy in Delhi, met the Indian Army brass on Tuesday and discussed the "stabilisation" force proposal.

Ambassador Robert Blackwill has also floated the issue at the highest levels. However, visiting US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage told reporters that he had briefed the Indian leadership in general on reconstructions efforts in Iraq. "There was no

specific request for troops nor anything of that nature was discussed," he said. Bound by the Parliament resolution on Iraq that mandates the UN route, the US "stabilisation force" proposal is being intensively debated at the official level and the final decision is still to be taken by the political leadership. It seems that the Government will have little objection to sending a peacekeeping force to Iraq if the UN is brought into the picture on Iraq.

The Iraq developments were discussed by the informal meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) last week.

Sources said that Thibault hinted to the top brass of the Indian Army that Washington was planning to bring a resolution in the UN Security Council and there was even a possibility of New Delhi administering one of the four military sectors in Iraq. Incidentally, the US has already circulated a draft resolution for discussion in the Security Council this week that gives sweeping powers to Washington and London as "occupying powers" and wants the UN to play the role of a coordinator for humanitarian relief and setting up of Iraqi police.

The first indication that India could be part of the "stabilisation force" came from Polish Deputy Defence Minister Januz Zemke this week. He said: "We are also getting signs that certain Asian countries, for example India, Pakistan and the Philippines, would be prepared to send troops." According to the minister, the

US, Britain and Poland would administer three of the four sectors. "A possible fourth sector would be managed by a country yet to be determined," he said.

But sending Indian men in uniform to Iraq is not so simple, notwithstanding the Parliament resolution. New Delhi is chary of sending peacekeepers to Iraq without UN sanction as it would amount to supporting a "liberating or occupying force (depends on whether you are on the US side or not)".

While the Army brass told US diplomats that decision to send troops vests with the political leadership, they made it clear that in case of an affirmative decision, the command and control of troops will be with the Indian commander—in this case a two-star general.

It is understood that the Army brass briefed Fernandes though it is still not clear whether the Americans have raised the issue with Brajesh Mishra, who is currently in Washington. Perhaps the Indian position will crystallise once the US brings the UN into picture.

J. F. [unclear]

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1 MAY 2003

India and the Iraq war

By C. Raja Mohan

110-10
27/3

INDIA'S COMMITMENT is to the people of Iraq and not to the regime of Saddam Hussein. That is at the heart of the policy of "middle path" that India had crafted to deal with the Gulf crisis that has inevitably transformed into a war. Despite considerable political pressure from the Opposition, the Government has held on to the rather cautious "middle path". This "middle path" in the war between America and Saddam Hussein has helped provide space to defend India's long-term interests in Iraq and the Gulf. It also reflects the new pragmatic strain that has taken root in India's foreign policy. Tempered by realism, India no longer believes rhetoric is a substitute for diplomacy. But as the conflict enters a decisive state, India's challenge is to find ways to end this war quickly and prepare for the post-war situation in Iraq.

As India watched the crisis in the Gulf deepen since last September and it became clear that war was inevitable, it had two clear-cut options. One was to support the Bush administration in this war, as part of building the "natural alliance" with the United States and claiming a long-term strategic role in its own extended neighbourhood. The realist case for such an approach might have had its merits. Extending political and military support to Washington at a time when it was badly isolated, it was argued by some, might have generated many positive spin-offs for India.

But it was too bold for the political leadership to stomach, for it departed so radically from the traditional impulses that guided Indian thinking about the world. If the United Nations Security Council had put its stamp of approval over American invasion of Iraq, India might have offered operational support to the U.S. With the deep divisions in the UNSC, it became impossible for New Delhi to adopt such a course. The popular sentiment against this war in India, as elsewhere in the world, made it

India's "middle path" in the war between America and Saddam Hussein has helped provide space to defend its long-term interests in Iraq and the Gulf.

untenable to be seen as siding with Washington in this war, despite projections by realists of a major strategic opportunity for India in the Gulf.

At the other end, there was strong pressure to join the ranks of France, Germany, Russia and China against the American war in Iraq. Such a course would have pleased the Opposition and taken the political heat off the Government. But India has resisted this temptation. The lessons from the first Gulf War during 1990-91, following the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein were instructive and nudged the Indian policy in a pragmatic direction.

Just like now, the Opposition then was demanding that India oppose the American effort to liberate Kuwait. Recall that the American war against Iraq last time had the full U.N. sanction. Those opposing the war now on the ground that it has no international legitimacy had rejected it last time when it was backed by the U.N. Desperate to get its own people out of the war zone in Kuwait, India could not bring itself to condemning Saddam Hussein's occupation of a fellow non-aligned nation. Coming under U.N. pressure, India withdrew its operational support to the American war just a couple of days before it ended. India ended up on the losing side of the war, alienated Kuwait and other Gulf Arabs, and gained nothing from supporting Saddam Hussein.

India's "middle path", prudent as it was, has run its course. The safe positions it had constructed on a number of platitudes are no longer relevant. With war having broken out, many of them serve no diplomatic purpose, except for posturing at home and fobbing off the domestic political opposition. The time has come for India to deal purposefully

with the dynamic war situation and its potential aftermath in Iraq. The Government must appoint a high-level special envoy who can engage the many external actors involved in shaping the outcome of this war and craft a role for India in the post-war arrangements in the Gulf.

As Operation Iraqi Freedom enters the second week, there is some room for intra-war diplomacy. As the U.S. forces begin to mount a massive military squeeze on Baghdad, dangerous battles loom ahead for the Iraqi capital. Before the U.S. troops make a forcible entry into Baghdad, there will be some political effort to avoid such an outcome. Saudi Arabia says it has some ideas on ending the war. Although the Bush administration has rejected any compromise less than the ouster of Saddam Hussein, it has not rejected all diplomatic efforts. Given its deep concern for the Iraqi people, India must lend its weight in averting a bloody takeover of Baghdad.

This cannot be done by empty statements from the non-aligned movement and the UNSC. India has no interest in legitimising a political intervention by the UNSC on issues of war and peace. That could be a ghost that will come back to haunt India in Kashmir. India should have no objections to a U.N. role in delivering humanitarian assistance, but it would be self-defeating to support any political move that seeks active U.N. political intervention in Iraq.

Instead of paying heed to the rhetorical statements from the Arab League which are not followed by its own members, Indian diplomacy must focus on working closely with the Gulf Arab neighbours of Iraq, who have lent support to U.S. military operations but do not wish to see a brutal showdown between

America and Saddam Hussein in Baghdad. India and its putative special envoy must stay in close touch with the Arab states bordering Iraq, which have the highest stake in bringing this war to a quick conclusion. He also needs to stay in touch with Turkey and Iran, the two non-Arab neighbours of Iraq who can shape the outcome of this war and are keys to future stability in Iraq.

As a humanitarian crisis begins to unfold in Iraq, the coalition forces have already mobilised considerable resources to be distributed in areas coming under their control. A large number of international and non-governmental organisations are already poised to deliver assistance. There have been no formal commitments from India on any serious plans to quickly move medical and other assistance required for the Iraqi people. Unveiling a substantive plan for providing relief and working out the organisational and logistical details must be an immediate priority for the Government.

Even more important for India is to begin to think about post-war political arrangements in Iraq. The most important objective for India is to work with other countries in preserving the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq. India would also like to see that all the aspirations of different communities in Iraq are protected within the framework of a single state centred in Baghdad. India also has a stake in seeing that the secular character of Iraq is preserved. Pursuing these objectives requires Indian diplomatic contact with various Iraqi groups and political formations within and outside the country. These include the various Kurdish groups in northern Iraq, the Iraqi National Congress, an umbrella organisation based in London, the Iraqi Shia leaders based in Teheran, besides many Sunni leaders associated with the regime in the past and present. The mechanism of a special envoy is the key to bringing the different imperatives of Indian diplomacy together at this stage.

27 MAR 2003

11-0-2003
Non-Cong. Opposition leaders
want India to take firm stand

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 26. Non-Congress Opposition leaders today demanded that the Vajpayee Government take a "categorical stand" calling for an end to the war against Iraq and ask the United Nations to intervene.

The leaders, including three former Prime Ministers and chiefs of eight other parties, also decided to observe March 31 as a nationwide protest day and appealed to the people to lodge a 'powerful' protest against the war to convey a message that India stands with the rest of the world in opposing the war.

In a joint statement, the leaders charged that the U.S. and Britain had violated all international laws and the U.N. charter by embarking on this war.

"This illegal and unjust war is being conducted in flagrant defiance of world public opinion", they said, adding that for the past one week, the Iraqi people had been subjected to a "barbaric attack" through aerial bombardment.

The statement said the loss of civilian lives and the destruction of property was mounting steadily and Iraq was a country with which India had close and friendly ties. This assault on the sovereignty of Iraq had been opposed by all sections of the people of India. India has a long tradition of lending support to countries defending their national sovereignty against imperialist aggression.

"It is unfortunate that the Vajpayee Government has not reflected the opinion of the Indian people by taking a firm stand condemning the U.S. aggression and de-

claring solidarity with Iraq", the statement said.

The signatories included, the former Prime Ministers, V.P. Singh, H.D. Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral, the Samajwadi party chief, Mulayam Singh Yadav, the NCP president, Sharad Pawar, the RJD president, Lalu Prasad Yadav, Harkishan Singh Surjeet (CPI-M), A.B. Bardhan (CPI), Debabrata Biswas (AIFB), Dipankar Bhattacharya (CPI-ML) and K. Pankajakshan (RSP).

The CPI-ML has decided to organise a mass anti-war rally and demonstration before the U.S. Embassy here on Friday.

On the same day, the party would also hold similar anti-war demonstrations before American Centres in Kolkata and Chennai. Anti-war protest will also be held in Guwahati, Agartala, Bhubaneswar and Ranchi.

27 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

'OTHERS HAVE NO INTEREST IN KASHMIR'

India cannot support U.S. war moves, says PM

By Amit Baruah

KUALA LUMPUR, FEB. 25. India cannot support the American war moves on Iraq and the United Nations is being severely tested on account of the continuing crisis, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, said here today.

Addressing a press conference, he said: "the U.S. role is such that it cannot be supported. We will decide what we have to do next after seeing what form the war will take."

Asked whether NAM could do anything to deter the U.S. from going to war, Mr. Vajpayee said that people's opinions did count, especially in democratic countries. "The demonstrations against war have been so huge, I don't think it would have had no impact on the U.S. President, George W. Bush, and other leaders. But the strength that is required is not yet in evidence."

Mr. Vajpayee said that the U.S. and those opposed to any unilateral action were still engaged in the U.N. Security Council.

Supporting these efforts, he said there could be no two views that a way out should be sought till the last moment, war averted and Iraq shown the correct path.

And if Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMD), there should be a ban on them, the Prime Minister said. But, the question arose why the WMD issue should be raised only in relation to Iraq.

"Don't others have such weapons?" The attitude adopted towards North Korea did not reveal that world leaders had a clear path before them. "There can be no differing standards".

On the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's statement that it needed two hands to clap, vis-à-vis Indo-Pak. relations, Mr. Vajpayee said:

"Tali nahin bajti to chutki baji lain" (if we can't clap, then we can at least click our fingers). "There should be some sound all the time."

He said he did not know what had been the experience of Gen. Musharraf during his meetings with NAM leaders, but his talks were confined to Iraq. There were talks on Pakistan as well and it was clear that other countries had "no interest" in Kashmir. All countries said that it was a bilateral matter and India and Pakistan should settle it.

The clear-cut statement from Malaysia against raising bilateral issues in NAM should open the eyes of the Pakistanis, Mr. Vajpayee said.

There was no link, no comparison between the Kashmir and Palestine issues. NAM would die if bilateral disputes were injected into it.

He admitted that because of the Iraq issue, there was considerable 'jaan' (life) in this summit. NAM was formed with the objective of stopping a world war and prodding nations to move away from military blocs and adopt an independent foreign policy.

Pointing out that the world stood on the verge of a war, Mr. Vajpayee was categorical that in this situation there was need for NAM. Before coming to the summit, he felt that the organisation might be divided on Iraq, but now it appeared that this would not happen.

Many countries, he said, believed that Iraq should accept the NAM proposal and move forward. If NAM spoke out fearlessly then it would be in a position to put off war and strengthen the constituency of peace.

The Prime Minister preferred not to respond to a question on the Ayodhya issue.

Musharraf's stand: Page 11

26 FEB 2003

THE HINDU

Ivanov, Powell, Straw call up Sinha

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 24. The Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, telephoned the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, on Sunday and the two shared concerns over the destruction and loss of human life in Iraq. Official sources said this evening that the two reviewed the ongoing developments in Iraq and agreed to remain in touch with each other. Mr. Ivanov and Mr. Sinha exchanged views on how the United Nations could once again be seized of the Iraqi matter given the mounting international concern over the serious humanitarian consequences of the ongoing military action. Separately, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, and the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, telephoned Mr. Sinha today and expressed condolences at the Kashmir killings.

Mr. Powell and Mr. Sinha did not discuss Iraq, the sources said.

On the terrorist attack, Gen. Powell said the

U.S. had repeatedly called for putting an end to cross-border terrorism. He said Washington would discuss the issue with Islamabad. In a related statement, the U.S. ambassador to India, Robert D. Blackwill, said: "The United States condemns the ghastly murders of innocent men, women and children at Nadimarg village. The global war on terrorism will not be won until such atrocities end against all countries. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families of the victims. We look forward to the terrorists being brought swiftly to justice."

Mr. Straw said he had expressed "shock" at the "appalling murder and attacks" on innocent civilians by terrorists. "The U.K. strongly condemns such acts. Our thoughts and sympathies are with the families of all killed and those who have been injured. These killings, as with earlier terrorist attacks, underline the need for continued action to eliminate the scourge of terrorism," he said.

THE HINDU

25 MAR 2003

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India not keen on taking any initiative on Iraq

By Amit Baruah

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NEW DELHI, MARCH 23. India has made it clear that it is not about to take any initiative, through the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) or otherwise, on Iraq, which could jeopardise New Delhi's improved equation with Washington.

Official sources said the NAM's failure to move the United Nations was made plain to Ali Akbar Velayati, special envoy of the Iranian President, Mohamed Khatami, who was in the capital on Friday.

With New Delhi in no mood to embark on any initiative, India and Iran agreed during Mr. Velayati's visit that they would remain in "bilateral contact" on Iraq and other issues. Clearly, India is aware that Iran is the third dimension of the "axis of evil" as seen by the U.S. President, George W. Bush.

India is today repeatedly pointing to the abject failure (and rightly so) of countries like France, Russia and China to convene an emergency session of the U.N. Security Council to discuss or bring a resolution to condemn the unilateral American invasion of Iraq. Even the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, has failed to make such a move.

It is pointing to the divisions in the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and Arab nations to justify the pragmatic stance adopted on Iraq. There is, in New Delhi's understanding, no need to antagonise the

U.S. by using words like "condemn" to describe the American military action.

In response to the Congress criticism of the Government's failure, the sources even point to the fact that India did not "condemn" the Soviet Union's "invasions" of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. There appears to be a degree of equation here between the old Soviet Union and the current United States as far as India's relationships are concerned.

The sources said it was not as if India had "approved" of the American military action, but pointed out that the language of diplomacy had to be different from the language of the Opposition politician.

But, the concept of the Indian "leadership role" in opposition to the U.S. as far as Iraq went was not going to "fly", the sources maintained. India, it was made plain, by responding to "principle" had landed itself in a mess by taking the Kashmir issue to the U.N. back in 1948.

A strident position on Iraq was not going to lead to anything, the source said, pointing to the failures of three of the five permanent members of the Security Council to do anything tangible on Iraq.

In the Indian understanding, Iraq, too, was not blameless. If it had provided the fullest cooperation, then U.N. weapons' inspectors could have given it a clean chit on the charge of possessing chemical and biological weapons. The sources pointed to the discovery of the Al-Samoud missiles

and some drones by the U.N. inspectors.

The sources were also concerned that alienating the U.S. and the U.K. could create problems for India on the Kashmir front and in the Security Council itself. They pointed to the fact that Pakistan had developed a close relationship with the U.S. by "cooperating" in nabbing the Al-Qaeda and the Taliban elements.

India had to ensure there was no "Nixonian-type" of tilt towards Pakistan by the U.S.

According to the sources, even the "middle path" adopted by India on Iraq was a "big deal" for the U.S. They maintained that there had been regular consultation between India and the U.S. on the Iraq issue. (It is hardly a secret that the U.S. is happy that Parliament did not adopt any kind of resolution on Iraq).

On the Iraqi war front, the sources felt that the greatest threat was to the territorial integrity of the country, having taken note of the entry of Turkish troops into northern Iraq.

For Iraq to remain intact as a nation, a strong international presence was necessary.

As of now, it could not be said what kind of regime would take over in Iraq. On the military campaign itself, the sources said the pitch could be queered if the war turned out to be a prolonged one.

This, the sources said, could have a bearing on India's growth prospects as well.

THE HINDU

24 MAR 2003

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Joshi defends Vajpayee on Iraq

ALLAHABAD, MARCH 23. Defending the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, for not "succumbing" to the Opposition's demand for passing a resolution condemning the U.S.-led attack on Iraq, the Human Resource Development Minister, Murli Manohar Joshi, said the Prime Minister must be allowed to choose appropriate words expressing India's concern.

Referring to the criticism of the Government for not adopting a resolution condemning the war against Iraq, Mr. Joshi said the matter should be left to the Prime Minister to articulate India's view in appropriate words keeping in view the national interest and international opinion.

Mr. Joshi said the country, under the leadership of Mr. Vajpayee had time and again made clear its disagreement with the U.S. on the Iraq issue, but the same need not be articulated by taking a hawkish stand.

The war on Iraq could have been avoided, Mr. Joshi said, adding large sections of the international community were against it and even in the U.S. anti-war protests were taking place. — PTI

THE HINDU

24 MAR 2003

Unjustified, says India

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, MARCH 20. India said today that the United States' "military action" against Iraq lacked "justification" and echoed the pronouncements of the United Nations chief weapons inspectors, Hans Blix and Mohammed El Baradei, that such action was "avoidable".

The statement was issued after an informal meeting among the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, and the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, and some others at the Prime Minister's residence.

Bush phones up PM

In a related development, the U.S. President, George W. Bush, telephoned the Prime Minister and informed him of the recent developments leading to the military action against Iraq.

Mr. Vajpayee, sources said, expressed "deep anguish" at the fact that the U.N. Security Council was unable to reach agreement on the course of action to be adopted on Iraq. Hoping that the military action would be concluded at the earliest, he told Mr. Bush of the need to provide humanitarian assistance, adding that India was ready to participate in such efforts.

The Prime Minister is also convening an all-party meeting on Saturday on Iraq.

In a statement, on which he

took no questions, the Foreign Office spokesman said this afternoon: "It is with the deepest anguish that we have seen reports of the commencement of military action in Iraq."

Taking care not to name the U.S., it said that India recognised the "full force and validity" of the international community to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction, set out in the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441.

"Recent weeks have seen serious divergence of opinion among members of the U.N. Security Council on action in respect of Iraq's compliance with Resolution 1441.

"It is a matter of grave concern that continuing differences within the Security Council prevented a harmonisation of the position of its members, resulting in seriously impairing the authority of the U.N. system.

'Not an evacuation'

The spokesman said that Air-India had operated additional flights on the basis of "commercial demand" to bring back some people, adding that this was not an "evacuation" and that "air space" around Iraq was open.

The feedback coming in from Indian missions in the Gulf was that there was no cause for panic and that they did not fear a major dislocation of the Indian community living there.

21 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

Left parties plan protest tomorrow

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 20. The U.S.-led military attack on Iraq today drew condemnation from various political and social organisations with the Left parties announcing a mass protest here on Saturday in front of the U.S. embassy.

The Congress deplored the decision to go to war against a non-aligned sovereign member of the United Nations. In a statement, the party chief spokesman, S. Jaipal Reddy, said the "decision to go to war tramples upon the United Nations' charter, denigrates the Security Council, flouts international law, does grave injury to the concept of national sovereignty and sets dangerous and unacceptable precedents".

The Communist Party of India strongly condemned the 'criminal war' launched by the U.S. and Britain, and termed it as a deliberate affront to world public opinion.

"This is a blatant and totally unjustified war of aggression against a sov-

eign country. It is a war for grabbing the rich oil resources of Iraq and is a further step towards America's hegemonistic designs," the Central Secretariat said in a statement.

It said the U.S. was planning to test all its latest advancement in weaponry of mass destruction against the defenceless civilian population of Iraq which had already suffered heavily from the decade-long economic sanctions. The CPI also demanded that the U.N. should take a firm stand against this war for ending it. "The future of the U.N. itself is at stake".

Echoing similar views, the CPI(M) politburo said the leadership of the United States and Britain would have to bear the full responsibility for the lives lost and the devastation caused to Iraq. "History will not forgive them for this crime."

Both the CPI and the CPI(M) demanded that the Vajpayee Government categorically condemn the American aggression and announce forthwith that no Indian facilities would be made for any purpose associated with this war.

Describing the war against Iraq as "unfortunate", the BJP president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, said the U.S. action was without justification and sanction of the U.N. Security Council.

Joining the chorus of protest, the CPI-ML (Liberation), said the "butcher brigade of Bush and Blair has revealed their imperialist-fangs by launching a war after withdrawing their resolution in U.N. in the face of a sure defeat". The party general secretary, Dipankar Bhattacharya, said the war was not just on Iraq but on the entire international opinion and charged that both Mr. Bush and Mr. Blair had ridiculed the international community.

The Committee Against War on Iraq plans to hold a massive demonstration in front of the U.S. embassy on Saturday. The CPI national secretary, D. Raja, said similar demonstrations would be held all over the country, and in metro cities of Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai in front of the U.S. Consulates.

The CPI-ML (New Democracy) too

held a demonstration here.

While condemning the attack, the party's Central Committee extended its support to the people of Iraq in defence of their independence and control over their resources. It said the U.N. should extend all help to the Iraqi people and call upon governments of different countries to extend this help and supply necessary arms and ammunition to them.

The Janata Dal (Secular) general secretary, Danish Ali, said the United States which had been a victim of terrorist strikes in September, 2001 was now destroying the United Nations.

The Lok Janshakti Party chief, Ramvilas Paswan, said an attack at this juncture would have grave consequences not only for West Asia but the whole world in general and South Asia in particular.

The Jamaat Ulama-i-Hind president Maulana Asad Madani, said it was the duty of international fraternity to exert fullest possible pressure on the U.S. to end the war at the earliest.

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Handwritten note: "Left parties plan protest tomorrow" written vertically.

21 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

Disappointed: India

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, MARCH 18. India is "deeply disappointed" at the United Nations Security Council's inability to "act collectively", specially the failure of the permanent members to "harmonise their positions" on Iraq.

"As long as the peaceful disarmament of Iraq has the slightest chance, we would continue to urge caution, self-restraint and high sense of responsibility on the part of concerned parties," the brief statement issued by the foreign office spokesman said. There was no reference to the United States by name in the statement — a sign that the Government was treading very carefully as far as taking a view on the impending military action by the U.S. against Iraq was concerned. Nor was there any reference to the "ultimatum" issued to the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein.

Stating that the Cabinet was briefed on the current situation, the statement said: "As the latest crisis had unfolded, India has taken the consistent position that Iraq must fully comply with U.N. Security Council resolutions for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction."

"Our counsel has been against war and in favour of peace. We have emphasised that all decisions on Iraq must be taken under the authority

of the U.N. We have stated that any move for change in regime in Iraq should come from within and not be imposed from outside. We have also been drawing attention to the precarious humanitarian situation of the Iraqi people which war would only aggravate," it said.

According to sources, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, telephoned the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, and explained the circumstances in which the ultimatum had been issued. On his part, Mr. Sinha put across the Indian position.

Separately, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, said the Cabinet had been briefed on Iraq by Mr. Sinha. There was no discussion on Iraq and no view was taken by the Cabinet, she said adding that the External Affairs Ministry was asked to articulate its response.

In a related development, the All-India Congress Committee spokesman said: "The decision to go to war tramples on the United Nation's charter, denigrates the Security Council, flouts international law, does grave injury to the concept of national sovereignty and sets dangerous and unacceptable precedents."

"The Congress party cannot but deplore this decision to go to war against a sovereign independent member of the United Nations."

19 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

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India pulls out diplomatic staff

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MARCH 17.

With a United States-led war against Iraq now becoming increasingly imminent, Indian diplomats left Baghdad on Sunday as part of a mounting withdrawal of foreign nationals from the country.

The Indian Ambassador to Iraq, B.B. Tyagi, moved to Amman by road from Baghdad, but the Indian Embassy in Iraq is technically still functional.

The Embassy, which will be manned by an Iraqi staff, can be approached for travel assistance, diplomatic sources said.

While eight Indian students left Iraq on Sunday, a handful of businessmen, working under the oil-for-food programme, have been advised to leave at

the earliest. The desert highway from Baghdad bifurcates after 600 km.

While one road heads for Amman, the other travels towards Damascus, Syria.

In Baghdad, shop owners were reportedly seen moving their merchandise to warehouses for protection, while residents swamped the markets to stock essential commodities before the bombing began.

Some residents in northern Iraq were seen rushing towards the Kurdish areas protected by the U.S. and British warplanes.

In a related development, the U.S. Central Command Chief, Tommy Franks, arrived in Kuwait on Monday to explore two possible invasion plans of southern Iraq, diplomatic sources said.

THE HINDU

18 MAR 2003

Crisis management group to deal with Iraq situation

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, MARCH 17. The Ministry of External Affairs has set up a crisis management group (CMG) to deal with the evolving situation in Iraq, specifically its implications for Indian nationals living in the Gulf.

Asked to comment on the 24-hour ultimatum extended by the United States to the U.N., the Foreign Office spokesman said he was not responding to any statement. The "supremacy" of the multilateral process must be maintained.

The spokesman said the CMG, being headed by R.M. Abhyankar, Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, sought directions and advice from the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, on the issue.

Representatives from the Ministries of Defence and Civil Aviation were present at the meeting and the plan was to invite officials from the Petroleum and Labour Ministries as well.

The spokesman said the CMG would look at all aspects of the Gulf situation as it evolved. It would take action as required by developments.

Though the Indian Ambassador to Iraq and his Indian staff had relocated to Amman, he was following developments closely, the spokesman stated, adding that the Embassy itself was open and being manned by local staff. The spokesman remarked that a control room was also being set up in the Ministry of External Affairs to provide information about Indian nationals. He said that 31 Indians had chosen to remain in Iraq of their own volition — three nuns from the Missionaries of Charity, eight charity workers in Karbala, four students in Najaf, 14 businessmen and two news correspondents.

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Asked if there was a plan to evacuate Indian nationals from Kuwait, the spokesman said the expectation was there would be no need to panic. The CMG, he said, would be in constant touch with Indian Embassies in the Gulf and the Government of India was committed to taking care of its nationals.

In another development, the spokesman said India had decided to extend a \$10 million credit line to Suriname, whose president, R.R. Venetiaan, held talks with the Indian leadership today. A joint statement issued by the two sides said that India had agreed to waive in its entirety all pending payments by Suriname to New Delhi against the first credit line of Rs. 50 million extended in 1992. "India and Suriname affirmed that terrorism cannot be justified in any form, for any cause or for any reason as an excuse. They agreed that the fight against terrorism must be global, comprehensive and sustained for the objective of total elimination of terrorism worldwide," the statement said.

The Surinamese side appreciated the evolving security concerns of India in the light of recent local, regional and global developments. It appreciated the restraint and responsibility shown by India despite its varied defence capabilities. "In this connection, Surinamese side supported the resolution of differences between India and Pakistan through a bilateral dialogue. It also recognised that cross-border infiltration and terrorism had to end to encourage resumption of dialogue. It called on the countries concerned to dismantle the infrastructure of support to terrorism and to stop serving as a platform for international terrorism," the statement added.

18 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

US ties force Delhi to walk Iraq tightrope

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, March 16: India's muted criticism of America's war-mongering in Iraq can be traced to its fear of jeopardising "excellent" relations with the US and its refusal to create a situation where Pakistan may have an edge in dealing with the Bush administration.

"We don't want to become vassals of the US. Neither do we want to declare our criticism of the Americans from the rooftops," a senior leader said. He said Delhi's nuances in its stand on the crisis were based on "safeguarding national interests and not on the ideology of the Cold War".

South Block is worried public criticism of the US stand on Iraq may cast a shadow on its relations with the Americans and also stem the upswing in their ties.

Delhi also needs Washington solidly behind it if its Kashmir policy is to be heard by the international community and to ensure Pakistan is not given any leeway to increase militant activities in the strife-torn state and elsewhere in the country.

India's stand on Iraq is based on four elements. First, it wants a peaceful resolution of the Iraqi crisis. Second, it wants the UN to take the final decision on what needs to be done about Iraq.

Third, it wants Iraq's "full and complete" compliance with UN Security Council resolution 1441. And fourth, it wants the sanctions on Iraq lifted once the UN is satisfied about Baghdad's compliance with the resolution.

The US does not appear to have a problem with the Indian stand. Senior US officials have, in fact, emphasised that Delhi's and Washington's positions on the crisis are almost identical.

Whether this is an exaggeration or not, indications are clear the US administration is more satisfied and happy with the Indian stand than that of some of its Western allies.

Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee

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dle path". This, in effect, means that though Delhi talks of a peaceful resolution of the crisis, it stops short of an anti-war stand

Moreover, its opposition to "unilateralism" in favour of UN's "multilateralism" is combined with the stress on "Iraq" complete and full compliance with resolution 1441.

In the entire statement of the Prime Minister, the US has not been named even once. This is deliberate move as even at the recent Non-Aligned Movement summit in Kuala Lumpur, India played a key role in ensuring the US was not named in the resolution on Iraq passed by the developing countries.

Indian leaders have been "more candid" in expressing their views on the Iraqi crisis during private conversations with US leaders, sources say.

During his recent telephone conversation with President George W. Bush, Vajpayee made it clear that India would not be able to support Washington if it went ahead with military action against Iraq without the Council's approval.

Vajpayee also did not hesitate to point out that Bush's proposed tough action would "enrage" a large number of people both within and outside India, particularly Muslims.

Indian leaders want to make it clear that those opposing the US stand should be objective in their views on the Iraqi President. "Saddam Hussein is no angel and this is something we should not forget. But that does not mean we support the proposed military action of the US in Iraq," a senior Indian leader said.

Another reason for India's guarded criticism of the US is the likelihood of a last-minute "patch-up" between Washington and its Western allies.

But even if the US goes to war without UN approval, India may have to be more vocal in its criticism of the US action. This wor-

Avoid bilaterals, Vajpayee tells NAM

Press Trust of India

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb. 25. The Non-Aligned Movement will die if it gets involved in bilateral problems, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said today, a day after the Pakistani President raised the Kashmir issue at the group's summit.



Tali nahi bajti to chutki baja lein. Kuch na kuch bajna chahiye (If Musharraf can't clap then let him click. Something should keep ringing)

"The NAM will die before it can revitalise itself if it gets involved in bilateral issues," the Prime Minister told Indian journalists at the end of his four-day visit to Malaysia to attend the

NAM summit. He urged NAM members to follow in the footsteps of other international groups such as the Organisation of Islamic Conference and Asean, that never allow bilateral issues

to cloud their agenda. He also rubbished Gen. Pervez Musharraf's attempts to draw a parallel between Kashmir and Palestine, saying: "The Kashmiris have given their verdict in the polls to stay with India." Mr Vajpayee was asked about Gen. Musharraf's remarks that both hands were required to clap and that if India was reluctant to resume talks, he too was not keen. The Prime Minister said: "*Tali nahi bajti to chutki baja lein. Kuch na kuch bajna chahiye.*"

US can't be the chosen UN: PM

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee came out with his strongest-possible reaction to the Iraq crisis on Wednesday when he expressed his unequivocal opposition to an outside force imposing a regime change in any country.

"The use of force by a superpower to change a regime is wrong and cannot be supported. Our views on this are very clear," Mr Vajpayee told the Lok Sabha when opposition members pressed him to clarify India's stand on Iraq. He expressed similar sentiments in the Rajya Sabha as well, where he said, "We want a multipolar (*bahurashtriya*) world. The concept of one country dictating a regime change in another doesn't fit this century."

Mr Vajpayee's comments were not contained in the formal identical statements made by him in both houses of parliament. Instead, his remarks were a response to the concerns and demands from MPs that he clear the government's position on regime change and unilateral action. Neither the statement nor his comments named the US. When asked specifically if India would condemn unilateral action against Iraq, Mr Vajpayee first hedged, saying, "We hope there will be no unilateral action." He then added, "If this does happen, we will condemn it."

His comments were greeted with thumping of desks and with the opposition taking the credit for provoking him into

INDIA: No unilateral action

- Respect UN and give time to inspectors
- One country dictating a regime change in another doesn't fit this century
- India will condemn a unilateral US attack

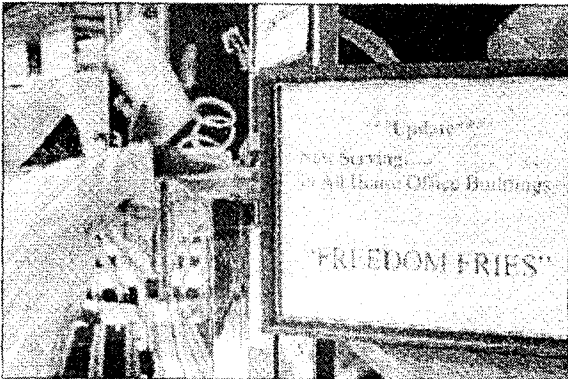
US/UK: The strain is telling

Morning: Rumsfeld says US can do without UK

Noon: UK stunned by this remark

Evening: Rumsfeld says he didn't really mean it

And in Washington...



With anger rising on the Capitol over French opposition to US policy on Iraq, representative Bob Ney has ordered the word 'French' be struck off all House menus, and be replaced by 'Freedom'. Hence 'Freedom Fries'.

making such a categorical statement. The Vajpayee government has been under severe attack from the opposition for its ambiguous stand on the Iraq crisis. They had even demanded that a resolution be adopted by parliament stating categorically that India would not support US military action against Iraq. The PM had convened an all-party meeting on Monday to brief

political leaders about India's position but the opposition was not satisfied with the government's response and instead pressed for a formal statement by the Prime Minister in parliament.

He told parliament that India had made it clear that decisions could not be made at gunpoint and that a *gudiya sarkar* (puppet regime) would not be accepted.

13 MAR 2003

'BAGHDAD MUST COOPERATE WITH INSPECTION PROCESS'

We'll not back regime change in Iraq by outside forces: PM

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, MARCH 12. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today ruled out support for a regime change brought about by outsiders in Iraq. "If a change has to come about, it should be done by the people of that country. No outside power has the right to do that," he told the Lok Sabha.

Responding to clarifications sought by members on his statement in the House, the Prime Minister also expressed himself against any unilateral action against Iraq. "I believe it will not happen because if it does, it will undermine the U.N. and also create a grave crisis," he said.

Mr. Vajpayee, however, appeared to hedge his bets on the issue of whether India would allow its facilities to be used in the event of a war. "I believe there will not be a war. Hence, I cannot answer what stand we will take if there is a war," he said. He hoped that a peaceful solution to the crisis would be found and favoured giving Iraq more time and even increasing the number of inspectors if the need arose.

In the Lok Sabha, Mr. Vajpayee was repeatedly goaded by the Opposition to take a categorical stand on the war. Shivraj Patil (Cong.) asked him to take an unambiguous stand on issues such as regime change in Iraq and the issue of giving more time to Baghdad. Somnath Chatterjee, CPI(M), demanded that the House pass a unanimous resolution condemning the U.S. threat of a

war against Iraq. He also wanted the Prime Minister to make it clear that India would not lend its facilities or allow refuelling of U.S. military aircraft in the event of a war.

In his statement to both Houses, the Prime Minister seemed to express a degree of unhappiness with Iraq's non-cooperation in the disarmament process. "We believe that Iraq must cooperate actively with the inspection process and comply fully with all relevant Security Council resolutions. "If the pace of this cooperation had been quicker, it may have enabled UNMOVIC and IAEA to certify to the U.N. Security Council that Iraq was in full compliance of Resolution 1441," he said.

Sticking to India's oft-repeated stand that the Security Council should decide on "what further action" was required, he said: "The international community must take a very careful look both at the objective of achieving Iraq's full compliance with U.N. resolutions and at the means to be adopted to reach this goal."

"If permitting more time and formulation of clearer criteria can facilitate a decision within the U.N. framework, we believe this option should be given a chance. We hope that the members of the Security Council will harmonise their positions to ensure that its final decision enhances the legitimacy and credibility of the United Nations.

"If unilateralism prevails, the U.N. would

be deeply scarred, with disastrous consequences for world order. The Government of India would strongly urge that no military action be taken which does not have the collective concurrence of the international community," Mr. Vajpayee maintained.

He said India recognised the "validity of the unanimous decision" of the Security Council in its Resolution 1441, which provided for the disarmament of Iraq and reaffirmed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, Kuwait and the neighbouring states. India had also voiced its concern on various occasions about the difficult humanitarian situation in Iraq. It had consistently stated that if Baghdad complied fully with the relevant Security Council resolutions then sanctions against that country should be lifted.

Mr. Vajpayee informed the Rajya Sabha about his telephone conversation with the U.S. President, George W. Bush. However, to a pointed query from the Congress MP, K. Natwar Singh, he preferred not to disclose what Mr. Bush shared with him. Senior Congress leader, Arjun Singh, wanted to know details of reports of the U.S. trying to cajole India into joining the war efforts and offering it a role in the post-war regime. He asked how aggressors could invite India to a "feast of vultures". Ram Deo Bhandary of the Rashtriya Janata Dal wondered why the Government did not name the U.S. even once in the statement.

13 MAR 2003

ONE HINDU

India's policy on Iraq hides its weaknesses

By Manoj Joshi
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: India is following a 'traditional' policy on Iraq, says a senior government official. "We are for peace, for the strict implementation of the UN resolution calling for the disarmament of Iraq and, if they cooperate, for the lifting of sanctions."

New Delhi-based foreign diplomats are not so charitable. If they are generous, they call it 'ambiguous'; if they are not they use stronger words.

Actually, New Delhi's policy is a well-calibrated waffle that conceals India's relative unimportance to American war plans in the Gulf, its general economic weakness, as well as the continuing price it is paying for not being able to manage its relations with Pakistan.

If India has not gone out of its way to support the US, neither has it been among the front rankers of those opposed to it. For the record, New Delhi has called for peace and emphatically declared that it will not support the US war effort.

Unlike Pakistan, which is on the Security Council, and Turkey, which borders Iraq, India does not have to take a stand and be counted. Neither is its absence from the frontline being noticed. There are no Indian military facilities that the US requires for its war, and so there are no complaints.

Indeed, the US is so comfortable with New Delhi's position that its ambassador has dangled before New Delhi the prospect of a share in the post-war reconstruction pie.

In the meantime, India does have to worry about the collateral damage that could accrue if war dramatically reduced oil supplies or otherwise disrupted the livelihood of the 3.5 million strong Indian community in the Persian Gulf littoral. Or for that matter took the world into an economic recession. Some planning is underway, but war brings uncertainties that simply cannot be predicted.

The government feels that at this juncture India has no options and keeping a pragmatic foot in both camps is a win-win formula. US officials have assured the government that the war will be short and will have a minimal fallout in terms of disruption of oil supplies or displacement of Indian expatriates in the Gulf.

The reason is not difficult to pinpoint. Last week President George W. Bush called Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee to seek support for his Iraq policy. Somewhat gratuitously, he also told Mr Vajpayee that he would continue to impress on Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf to rein in the 'jihadis'. Having failed to rein in Pakistan through a military show of force last year, the government has no options but to keep on the right side of the US.

12 MAR 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

এই আক্রমণ অযৌক্তিক, বুশকে স্পষ্ট জানালেন বাজপেয়ী

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২০ মার্চ — ইয়াকে যুদ্ধ শুরু হওয়ায় 'গভীর হতাশা' প্রকাশ করে বিদেশমন্ত্রক আজ আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে জানিয়েছে, এই সামরিক হানা 'অযৌক্তিক'। সন্ধ্যায় মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ বুশ ফোন করলে প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীও তাকে সরাসরি এ কথা জানিয়ে সেন। এই যুদ্ধ যাতে দ্রুত শেষ হয়, সে জন্য তিনি বুশকে অনুরোধ করেন।

বাজপেয়ী আজ ভারতের সরকারি অবস্থানের কথাই বুশকে জানিয়েছেন। এই যুদ্ধে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের কর্তৃত্ব খর্ব হবে বলে দুপুরেই বিদেশমন্ত্রক মন্তব্য করে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী এই বক্তব্যেরই পুনরাবৃত্তি করে বুশকে বলেন, ইরাকের মানুষের জন্য মানবিক সহায়তার বিষয়টিকে গুরুত্ব দিতে হবে। যুদ্ধের প্রসঙ্গ আলোচনার পাশাপাশি বুশ বাজপেয়ীকে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর পঁচ বছর পূর্তির জন্য অভিনন্দন জানান।

যুদ্ধের প্রেক্ষিতে আজ বিদেশমন্ত্রকের বিবৃতিতে বলা হয়েছে, "এটা অত্যন্ত উদ্বেগজনক ঘটনা যে নিরাপত্তা পরিষদের সদস্যদের ক্রমাগত মতপার্থক্যে ঐক্যবদ্ধ ভাবে কোনও অবস্থান নেওয়া সম্ভব হয়নি। এতে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের গুরুত্ব খর্ব হয়েছে। আজ যে সামরিক অভিযান শুরু হয়েছে তা যুক্তিহীন। হাস রিঙ্গ ও আল বারাদেইয়ের বিভিন্ন উক্তি থেকে এ কথাই মনে হয়েছে যে, সামরিক অভিযান এড়িয়ে যাওয়া যেত।"

পরে বুশকে টিক এই অবস্থানই ব্যাখ্যা করেন বাজপেয়ী। সরকারি সূত্রের বক্তব্য, ভারত এই যুদ্ধ থেকে এতদূরই দূরে দাঁড়িয়ে

যে এর বেশি খোলাখুলি কিছু বলা ন্যাঈদ্বিধির পক্ষে নিরর্থক। ভারত এতদিন যে মধ্যপন্থার কথা বলে আসছিল তার সঙ্গে এই বক্তব্য সম্পূর্ণ। তবে, ইরাকের মানুষের দুর্দশার কথা উল্লেখ করে যুদ্ধকীড়িত মানুষের পাশে থাকার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছে ভারত।

আজ উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী জানিয়েছেন, "আপাতত আমরা যুদ্ধের সমস্ত তথ্য সংগ্রহ করছি। মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটিতে তা নিয়ে আলোচনা হবে।" কাল এই কমিটির বৈঠক হতে পারে। 'র' আভাস দিয়েছে, যুদ্ধ আরও দু'সপ্তাহ চলতে পারে। পরিস্থিতির উপরে সতর্ক নজরদারি রাখা হয়েছে দাবি করে আজ বিদেশমন্ত্রক আশ্বাস দিয়েছে, উপসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের ভারতীয়দের এখনই

যেভাবে কোনও কারণ নেই। তবে উপসাগরীয় অঞ্চলে বসবাসকারী ভারতীয়দের ফিরিয়ে আনার সিদ্ধান্ত এখনও পর্যন্ত কেস নেয়নি। তবে ইরাক থেকে ইতিমধ্যেই ভারতীয়দের সরিয়ে আনানো নিয়ে আসা হয়েছে। ভবিষ্যতে প্রয়োজনে তাঁদের দেশে নিয়ে আসা হবে।

ভারত কেন মধ্যপন্থা নিয়ে চলেছে এবং মার্কিন ভূমিকার কড়া নিন্দা করছে না তা আগেও বিদেশমন্ত্রী যশবন্ত সিনহা সর্বদলীয় বৈঠকে ব্যাখ্যা করেছিলেন। সেই ব্যাখ্যার সঙ্গে সঙ্গতি রেখে আজকের বিবৃতিতেও বলা হয়েছে, নিরাপত্তা পরিষদের প্রস্তাব বা তার উদ্দেশ্যের সঙ্গে ভারত একমত। অর্থাৎ, ইরাক যে একটা বিপজ্জনক দেশে পরিণত হয়েছিল তা ভারত অস্বীকার করছে না। এবং সেই কারণেই ভারতের

সমালোচনার সবও খুব উঁচু তারে রাখা নেই বলে সরকারি সূত্রে জানানো হয়েছে। ইরাক পরিস্থিতিতে কেন্দ্র করে আজ বিভিন্ন মন্ত্রকের মধ্যে গোটা দিনই দফায় দফায় বৈঠক চলেছে। মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটির বৈঠক আজ না হলেও আজ সকালে প্রধানমন্ত্রী বৈঠক করেন উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী, বিদেশমন্ত্রী যশবন্ত সিনহা, অর্থমন্ত্রী যশোবন্ত সিংহ, প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজ প্রমুখের সঙ্গে। এই আলোচনার সময়ই বিদেশমন্ত্রকের বিবৃতিটি তৈরি হয়। এছাড়া আজকেই প্রথম বৈঠকে বসে সদ্য তৈরি হওয়া 'ক্রাইসিস ম্যানেজমেন্ট গ্রুপ' (সি এম জি)। যুদ্ধ দু'সপ্তাহের বেশি চললে কতটা আর্থিক ক্ষয়ক্ষতি হবে সে ব্যাপারে একটি রিপোর্ট তৈরি করেছে অর্থমন্ত্রক।

110-1
12/3

Nothing short of PM's statement will do: Opposition

J.F. Penning

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 11. The Opposition parties in Parliament today kept up the pressure on the Government to state its stand categorically on the looming war over Iraq. In both the Houses, Opposition members joined hands demanding a statement from the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee.

The Rajya Sabha witnessed uproarious scenes for 30 minutes. The issue was raised during zero hour by Pranab Mukherjee (Cong.), who said that Mr. Vajpayee should take Parliament into confidence. "The all-party meeting is not a substitute for making a statement on the floor of the House. There are several issues such as whether U.S. war planes would be allowed (here) and whether the Indian soil would be used..." he said.

As the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Sushma Swaraj, rose to say that as per the direction of the Chair on Monday either the Prime Minister or his nominee should come to the House and make a statement, the External Affairs Minister came to make a statement. But Congress, CPI(M) and RJD members were on their feet demanding that the Prime Minister come to the House.

Mr. Mukherjee said that except making some references while replying to the motion of thanks to the President's address, the Prime Minister did not make any statement on Iraq. "This is a peculiar situation. We expected the Prime Minister to take the House into confidence as it is a matter of concern to all."

Ms. Swaraj clarified that on Monday she had not given any assurance about Mr. Vajpayee coming to the House and as directed by the Chair, Yashwant Sinha was present to make a statement. This raised another din and the Deputy Chairperson, Najma Heptulla, then asked Ms. Swaraj whether the Prime Minister would make a statement. Ms. Swaraj said that if the members so desired, he would come to the House at a convenient time.

The issue was raised in the Lok Sabha during question hour by Prabod Panda of the CPI(M). He was supported by Shivraj Patil (Cong.) who stressed that this being a "very grim issue that affects the nation's interest deeply, Mr. Vajpayee must make a statement before Parliament".

Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M) lamented that at the all-party meeting on Monday, the Government did not agree to a joint resolution of Parliament condemning a war on Iraq. There was no reason for India not to oppose a war. "We should also make it absolutely clear that our facilities will not be available in the war against Iraq," he said.

The Government, however, received unexpected support from the former Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar. He urged the Opposition not to insist on a parliamentary resolution, as it would bind the Government and deny it elbow room in a rapidly changing situation. As Prime Minister in 1991, he had allowed refuelling facilities to American planes during the first Gulf war.

Vijay Kumar Malhotra (BJP) joined issue with the Opposition for criticising the Government.

SEE HINDU

1 2 MAR 2003

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2003

✓ H9-10 12/3 ✓ H9-10 12/3
DANGEROUS DRIFT

THE PUSILLANIMITY DISPLAYED by New Delhi in its refusal to stake out a position against a war on Iraq is inexcusable. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has sought to portray the situation that India confronts in regard to this issue, at this juncture, as one where India is being made to choose between two friends. He has advocated that India follow "a middle path" and, thereby, implicitly suggested that the country make no choice at all. Such an approach to global affairs, wherein the fear of alienating one side or the other is the operative factor, not only represents a total abandonment of principle but also indicates a lack of the sense of purpose and will that add weight to a country's status within the international community. By expressing the pious hope that a peaceful solution will be arrived at rather than taking a categorical position against war, New Delhi appears to imply that it does discern some justification for a U.S.-led military strike against Iraq. What is at the forefront of global events at this point in time, and therefore what needs to be urgently attended to, is the seemingly unstoppable slide towards hostilities. The question of Iraq's non-compliance with its obligations to rid itself of a weapons of mass destruction capability is a matter that the global community has been seized of and has constantly addressed. Global activism on the score has begun to produce results with Iraq stepping up the pace of its cooperation with the United Nations weapons inspection teams. With a peaceful solution having become viable, it is all the more necessary that a stand be taken against a war that is ostensibly meant to achieve the same purpose. While it was slow to take a start, the campaign against war has picked up such momentum as to cause an upheaval in many parts of the world, including within the United Kingdom, the country that was otherwise seen to be mostly closely aligned with the U.S. With a multitude of countries taking a stand, Mr. Vajpayee ought to have acceded to the Opposition's demand and taken a position

that reflected the strong sentiment against war shared by many people across the country.

Neither can New Delhi afford to be ambivalent about the collateral objective that Washington apparently seeks to achieve through war, namely a regime change in Iraq. The U.S. is desperately trying to convince the rest of the global community that the removal from power of Iraq's President, Saddam Hussein, is necessary not only because he threatens the world outside his country but also because he represses his own people. This policy, for which Washington is assiduously drumming up support, directly contravenes a principle of international politics which India has always treated as a matter of faith — that of non-intervention in the internal affairs of any country. The change of a country's regime might be presented as a remedy only for extreme cases at the present, but if it comes to be accepted in principle it could spin off other doctrines that advocate external intervention at different levels, for different reasons and on different scales. Confronted as it is by multiple challenges in trying to integrate a multitude of disparate groups into the national mainstream, and displaying many lacunae on the score of good governance as it does, India has to be extremely wary of doctrines that promote external intervention in domestic affairs. The principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of any country has to be given sustenance, and should not be allowed to erode, at a juncture when the sovereign space of many countries is already being invaded by the forces of economic globalisation.

With so many aspects of India's national interest likely to be challenged by these developments, and with its world view likely to be buffeted by the new doctrines, Mr. Vajpayee and his colleagues should have invited a wide-ranging and in-depth discussion on the issues instead of presenting an anodyne version of such debate as did take place at the all-party meeting. But hopefully, Parliament will take on a burden that the Government has not cared to pick up.

12 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

ATAL REJECTS LEFT DEMAND TO PASS RESOLUTION AGAINST MILITARY STRIKE

Russia to veto UN Iraq resolution

Moscow
10 MARCH



PUTIN

RUSSIA will veto the US-British draft of the UN Security Council resolution setting a March 17 deadline for Iraq to disarm, Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov said on Monday. "Russia will vote against the draft resolution tabled by the US, Britain and Spain containing an ultimatum in the form of demands. They contradict the course being implemented on the basis of previous resolution 1,441," Mr Ivanov was quoted as saying by *Itar-Tass*.

It was the first explicit reference by Russia to vote against the resolution in its current form, while earlier it vowed to "block" the move. Mr Ivanov's statement came after the Kremlin security meet, chaired by President Vladimir Putin. It was held against the backdrop of US media reports claiming Mr Putin assured President George W. Bush that Moscow will not veto the US-sponsored draft authorising automatic use of military force against Iraq.

"Russia has been declaring and once again says it cannot support such draft. It will be hardly expedient to table such draft before the UN SC. But if it is tabled, Russia will vote against," Mr Ivanov said. In its Sunday issue, *Time* had reported Mr Putin had assured Mr Bush that Moscow will not veto the US-British draft setting the March 17 deadline, which needs 9 votes of the 15-member Security Council for adoption, provided Russia, France and China abstain. —PTI

PM rules out proactive support for US war plans



BATTLE GROUND: Deputy prime minister L.K. Advani and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee greet leader of the Opposition Sonia Gandhi at an all-party meeting on the Iraq crisis in New Delhi on Monday. — AFP

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 10 MARCH

PRIME Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Monday ruled out any proactive support for the US war plans against Iraq.

Addressing an all-party meeting to discuss the looming threat of a US-led war, the Prime Minister and his government rejected the demand from a section of the Opposition, particularly the Left and the RJD, for a resolution against unilateral US action.

Prime Minister who has been advocating a middle path, which will take into consideration its self interest, cautioned the participants against an "instant" analysis of the emerging situation. While India is not happy with the US' plans to go ahead with its war plans with the "coalition of the willing," it is aware that those opposing the war plans of the US have not been sensitive to New Delhi's interest. The Prime Minister had referred to this during an intervention in House where he hinted about a gang up at the Kuala Lumpur meeting of the NAM against India. The Left de-

scribed this position as a "surrender" to the US. The Third World sentimentalists in the Left have been arguing for a proactive opposition to the US war plans on the lines of France and Russia.

Mr Vajpayee insisted the government will have to take into consideration the changed reality. At the same time his government was against war and that decisions should be taken via the UN route. "However powerful the country may be, it cannot take unilateral action." External affairs minister Yashwant Sinha said the situation in the Gulf region was "developing very rapidly" and that India was ready to meet any contingency that may arise in the event of a war.

"We have taken all precautions to ensure the safety and security of Indian nationals in that area," he said adding that on the question of oil supplies there should not be any worry. "We have built our reserves. There is no cause for concern." Mr Sinha who disagreed with the Left's position about Iraq's innocence said the Saddam Hussein regime, too, was responsible for the plight.

Army briefs PM, others on consequences of global war

New Delhi
10 MARCH

PRIME Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and his senior ministers have been extensively briefed by the military on the possible consequences of an US attack on Iraq. Mr Vajpayee, deputy prime minister L.K. Advani and defence minister George Fernandes attended the briefing late on Sunday at the "war room," or the main centre for controlling military operations, at the defence ministry.

Military sources said the nearly two-hour-long briefing was extensive and dealt with all possible consequences of an US attack as well as its likely impact on the Indian subcontinent. "All security issues, including the likely reaction of Pakistan and other neighbouring countries, were factored into the briefing," said a senior Indian Army official.

The military top brass, including the chiefs of the three services and officials from the integrated defence staff, outlined steps that could be taken by India to counter any consequences arising from a possible war in Iraq. The military officials also presented an assessment of whether such a war could spread in the region, the sources said. The briefing came ahead of a meeting of all political parties called by Mr Vajpayee on Monday to discuss the Iraq crisis. The military sources said the briefing was aimed at preparing Mr Vajpayee and others. —IANS

Govt shy of anti-US stand, angers Opp

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 10

MONDAY'S ALL-PARTY meeting on Iraq failed to reach a consensus barring a broad agreement that a war should be averted and all action routed through the United Nations.

The government, which favoured a "middle path" keeping in mind India's friendly relations with both Baghdad and Washington, rejected the Opposition's demand for a parliamentary resolution condemning any

unilateral action on Iraq. The Centre also refused to commit itself against offering facilities to the US if it attacked Baghdad, prompting the CPI(M)'s Somnath Chatterjee to allege that the government was afraid to "annoy" Washington. Vajpayee told the meeting that the question of providing or not providing facilities to the US would arise only if Washington asks for help.

Since some key NDA allies like the TDP also want a resolution against the US, the Op-

position is expected to raise the matter in the Lok Sabha to try and force the government to spell out its stand.

Thirty-seven political leaders, including Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani and Leader of the Opposition Sonia Gandhi, attended Monday's two-hour meeting called by the Prime Minister.

External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha—who briefed the meeting and later the media—gave an indication of the government's wait-and-watch

approach. He stressed that while the government was not against a parliamentary resolution, it wouldn't rush into taking a stand at a time when things were moving very fast.

Sinha said that India was moving along with the Non-Aligned Movement resolution (which does not name the US) and the Security Council resolutions on Iraq.

He said the government was in touch with all departments and was ready to evacuate the Indians in Iraq if the need arose.

g.f. sinha

11/3

OPPOSITION DISAPPOINTED

PM for 'middle-path' approach to Iraq

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 10. The Vajpayee Government today failed to bridge the differences in perception with some of its allies and the Opposition over India's stand on the impending war on Iraq.

The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, elaborated on the 'middle-path' approach and said the Government preferred a peaceful resolution of the conflict through the United Nations and was against any military conflict. Steps were being taken to ensure oil supplies and the safety of Indians in the region.

Indians advised to leave

The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, later told correspondents that while the Government did not visualise the need for largescale evacuation from the region, the 50 or so people residing in Iraq had been advised to leave.

The all-party meeting convened by the Government left the Opposition disappointed with New Delhi's 'refusal' to take a "categorical position against the war". The Opposition now intends to raise the issue in Parliament in a big way.

Mr. Vajpayee told the leaders of various political parties that a 'middle-path' approach was preferred since New Delhi had good and cordial relations with both Washington and Baghdad. In Mr. Sinha's assessment,

there was a broad consensus at the end of the meeting though there might be variation in language. The Opposition, however, had a different viewpoint. Turning down the demand for passing a resolution by both Houses of Parliament, Mr. Sinha said that developments in the region were changing rapidly and any formal resolution could become out of date the next day. "The developments are very rapid and they are moving so fast that anything said today may become stale tomorrow," he said adding that the Government was not against any resolution.

The Government was keeping a close watch and if at any point of time it felt there was a requirement for such a resolution, it could be considered.

Contingency plans

Plans had been drawn to meet any contingency, including the safety and security of Indians in the area and oil supplies. Oil reserves had been built up and that there was no cause for concern.

Responding to the Opposition suggestion that New Delhi should turn down any request by Washington to use Indian facilities in the event of a war, the Prime Minister said the issue of use of facilities would arise only if there was such a request, which had not been made so far. Mr. Sinha said the Government was committed to the res-

olution adopted at the recent Kuala Lumpur Non-Aligned Movement summit.

Significantly, the Opposition demand for a joint resolution had the backing of the BJP's allies such as the TDP and the DMK. "We are very disappointed that the Government is adamant about not naming the U.S.," said a visibly upset Somnath Chatterjee of the CPI (M) after the meeting. The issue is likely to figure prominently in Parliament.

Sonia critical of U.S.

During her intervention, the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, urged the Government to take a stand that "reflected at the Government level, the strong sentiment across the country against a war in Iraq". Ms. Gandhi was also critical of the U.S. for creating a "grave crisis" and its stated aim of effecting a regime change in Iraq. "Nobody has the right to effect a regime change and no power, no matter how strong, should resort to the use of force without the U.N. sanction" she said. Ms. Gandhi also demanded a comprehensive statement from the Government on its plans to deal with the situation.

The Samajwadi Party chief, Mulayam Singh Yadav, opposed war at all costs. "Iraq had been given a clean chit by the U.N. inspectors," he said. Yerran Naidu (TDP) too said war should be averted at all costs.

11 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

ALL-PARTY MEETING TODAY

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Army briefs PM on likely impact of Iraq war

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, MARCH 9. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, was today given a full briefing by the top military brass on the likely scenario in the event of an attack on Iraq by the United States and a full-scale war in the region.

The briefing took place ahead of tomorrow's all-party meeting called by Mr. Vajpayee, so that he will be fully prepared to answer all the questions and in a position to brief leaders.

For nearly two hours this evening, Mr. Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, and the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, were at the operations room in South Block, official sources confirmed here. With the help of maps and charts, a complete briefing was given to the Prime Minister on the possible scenario in the event of a war, including its impact on India and the steps that needed to be taken. He was also given a military perception on

the possibility of such a war spreading in the region.

Officials were tight-lipped about the details of the briefing, which was described as "comprehensive."

U.S., France step up lobbying

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

UNITED NATIONS, MARCH 9. With a vote on the second U.S.-backed United Nations Security Council Resolution — authorising the use of force against Iraq — expected to be moved anytime after Tuesday, the United States and France are stepping up the diplomatic battle trying to enlist support for their positions.

The U.S. President, George W. Bush, who generally spends the weekends at Camp David, stayed back at the White House to attend the Gridiron dinner — a journalist event — on Saturday evening. But the environment being what it is, Mr. Bush passed up the comedy routine

for some very brief, serious remarks to the mediapersons and their guests. Referring to the nearly 3,00,000 troops assembled in and around the Persian Gulf, Mr. Bush said "they are prepared, if necessary, to remove a gathering danger."

Mr. Bush is said to have spoken to the Afghanistan President, Hamid Karzai, on matters pertaining to reconstruction; and is said to be holding off until Monday to make the round of calls to the leaders representing the Security Council, asking them to support the resolution. By then, he will have a better idea as to whether the U.S. is close at all to the nine votes it needs to get the resolution passed and whether, at the same time, it can ensure that Russia, France and China do not exercise their veto.

Most of the activity at the Security Council over the weekend was confined to telephone diplomacy.

The Council is expected to meet again on Monday where

the lobbying will start all over again.

Diplomats say that no one can be certain of the numbers until the very end. Although Mr. Bush has said that he will press for a vote on the resolution, one view is that he may not do so if Washington foresees a humiliating defeat. As of now, it has four votes including that of itself; and notwithstanding any political and economic incentives that are being held out, the non-permanent members are in such a difficult spot that movement towards the U.S. position is not noticeable.

Mr. Bush is in a tight political spot at home as well even if he has routinely brushed off the notion that policy is guided by opinion polls.

In the present context, though his overall approval rating has not nosedived, the fact remains that a clear majority of the Americans want the U.S. to fight a war with Iraq only with the U.N. backing.

U.N pulls out staff: Page 14

10 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

All-party meet on Iraq comes at a crucial stage

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, MARCH 7. The Vajpayee Government's decision to convene an all-party meeting on Monday comes just before the United States and its allies are likely to place their "second resolution" on Iraq before the United Nations Security Council. And, as appears inevitable, the U.S., with or without a U.N. mandate, will go the whole hog in its attempt to "disarm" Iraq and effect a regime change there.

In the days ahead, an attack by the American-led "coalition of the willing" on Iraq is likely and India will have to take a position on the action. By convening the all-party meeting, the Government has taken a welcome step of consultation across the political spectrum.

The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, is expected to be present at the meeting.

According to informed sources, during the recent telephone conversation between the Prime

Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the U.S. President, George W. Bush, India's preference for the U.N. route was made clear.

The telephone call itself came a day after Mr. Vajpayee spoke in Parliament of a "middle path" on Iraq — which he referred to as an "old policy" for India. The Prime Minister, who said last month in Kuala Lumpur that the U.S. role in Iraq was such that it could not be supported, also maintained in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that after the end of the Cold War, the world was dominated by "one nation" and other countries needed to think deeply about it.

Referring to Pakistan, he said if Washington was unable to prevail on Islamabad on the issue of cross-border terrorism, it was an expression of "American weakness."

In recent days, Mr. Vajpayee has not hesitated in criticising the U.S. while stating that India should take the "middle path" on Iraq.

'India committed to peaceful solution in Iraq'

NEW DELHI, MARCH 7. The Minister for External Affairs, Yashwant Sinha, said today that India remained committed towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Iraq and the United States.

"We are at a critical juncture in world history," he said in the Rajya Sabha. "This calls for the combined wisdom of the international community," he said intervening in the debate on a private member's resolution, moved by the CPI(M)'s Jibon Roy, on the impending war against Iraq, urging the Government to take the lead in uniting the non-aligned countries to take a unified stand on the issue.

He said the situation was fast developing, with the U.S. President, George Bush, stating that Washington was in the final stages of diplomacy. But no power — super or otherwise — should go on changing regimes in other countries, Mr. Sinha said.

India had said from all platforms that a military strike against Iraq should be averted because Baghdad was complying with United Nations resolutions, the Minister said. The U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441 calls upon Iraq to destroy weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Sinha said the U.N. would decide on further action if there was any further material breach by Iraq. Economic sanctions against Iraq should be lifted if there was no breach of the U.N. resolutions.

In case war breaks out, Mr. Sinha said, there should be no panic among the 3.5 million Indians living in the region. The Government would take adequate precautions and there may be small dislocation of people. But there would be no need for any massive airlift.

In the Lok Sabha, the Opposition had demanded that it be taken into confidence on India's stance on the Iraq crisis

before Parliament went into recess from March 13.

The Congress expressed apprehension that the U.S. would try to intervene in India's internal affairs if Washington was allowed to impose its will on Iraq.

Members cutting across party lines decried the U.S. "hegemonic" attitude towards Iraq and called for strengthening the Non-Aligned Movement to resist such moves and protect the interests of developing countries. The members, including those from the BJP, the Congress, the Left and the DMK, expressed solidarity with Iraq and opposed unilateral action without U.N. sanction against the Saddam regime.

Congress member, Natwar Singh, said the idea of "regime change" in Iraq by the U.S. was fraught with serious consequences, as it would start a precedence of such changes in other countries through outside force. It would bypass the U.N.

— UNI

THE HINDU

8 MAR 2003

India's Afghan policy

T. Sreedhar

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THROUGHOUT THE 1980s and the 1990s, India looked at the developments in Afghanistan with a certain amount of dismay. It could not fathom the former Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Initially, the policy makers in New Delhi initially tried to find a political way out — gently persuading the Soviet Union to withdraw. India even offered to work with Pakistan to find a political solution. But Pakistan's Zia-ul-Haq refused to oblige. The Cold War politics practiced by the Great Powers in Afghanistan was too complex for India to intervene effectively.

After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, India kept a close watch on Islamabad's game plan. New Delhi's moves such as helping Burhanuddin Rabbani met with extremely limited success. Alarm bells began ringing with the Taliban's arrival on the scene in 1994. India saw a link between the developments in Jammu and Kashmir, the Taliban's creation and the way it was consolidating its position in Afghanistan. India's efforts to sensitise the great powers about this development had no success. After the capture of Kabul in September 1996, India closed down its mission there.

However, as a goodwill gesture to the Afghan people and its long-standing relationship with Kabul, India maintained contacts with the Taliban and the Northern Alliance forces and continued humanitarian assistance to both factions.

The hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight IC-814 to Kandahar on Christmas-eve in 1999 brought a swift change in India's policy towards the Taliban. By the spring of 2000, Pakistan's game plan of trying to divide Afghanistan on ethnic lines was known in the rest of the neighbourhood — Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and India were quick to evolve a commonality of interests. India set itself two tasks: not to allow Afghanistan's territorial integrity to be disturbed under any circumstances; and to strengthen the Northern Alliance to fight the Tali-

ban. India then decided to make its presence felt to beef up the forces of the Northern Alliance. Strategically, making the Turkmenistan capital, Dushanbe, a staging post made a lot of sense as it is close to the Northern Alliance stronghold, Panjshir Valley. A field hospital at Farkhar, near Dushanbe, was established in early 2000.

Simultaneously, the airfields in and around Dushanbe were made

ni. The assassination of Masood did dampen spirits to a certain extent. The September 11, 2001, attacks by the Taliban-Al-Qaeda on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon woke the U.S. from its slumber. The triumvirate — Mr. Qanooni, Mr. Abdullah and Gen. Fahim — proved brilliant in preparing their forces to synchronise their attacks with that of the U.S. They were also aware that the U.S. was unlikely to seek their help.

India should make a long term investment in ensuring that a Taliban-type of government never comes to power again in Afghanistan.

operational to ferry equipment to the Northern Alliance. India also began coordinating efforts with the Central Asian Republics. They agreed to be part of the broad front being proposed by India along with Iran. They readily opened their stores of Soviet vintage arms and ammunition and aircraft to the Northern Alliance.

This was also the period during which Ahmed Shah Masood made unannounced visits to India, the last being in May 2001, to refine his strategy in combating the Taliban. In his assessment, the Taliban could not last a single day without Pakistan's military support; and India having fought four wars with Pakistan understood the latter's military machine better than anyone.

Though not conclusively proven, circumstantial evidence shows that the Taliban-Al-Qaeda leadership assumed that eliminating Masood would automatically result in a collapse of the Northern Alliance. In spite of warnings from friendly countries such as India, Masood decided to give an interview to an "Algerian" television network during which he was killed. That was on September 9, 2001.

The Taliban-Al-Qaeda underestimated Masood's vision and foresight. Anticipating an eventuality of this type, he groomed three of his close associates — Mohammad Fahim, Abdullah Abdullah and Qanooni.

As late as 2001, one U.S. diplomat in Islamabad dismissed Masood as irrelevant, adding that Washington saw him as part of the problem and not as part of the solution."

As the U.S. war, Operation Enduring Freedom, started on October 7, 2001, though India extended complete support to it, things did not move the way it expected. One of Afghanistan's neighbours, Iran, was more or less excluded from the alliance; and India's intelligence inputs were seen by the U.S. war-planners through the spectrum of India-Pakistan relations.

The Northern Alliance was seen as an appendage of India. The first three weeks of bombing, from October 7 to 28, 2001, produced no tangible results to the U.S. on the ground. The widespread criticism of aimless U.S. bombing and high civilian casualties brought the whole operation under severe criticism. At this point, Indian and Russian intervention made the U.S. war planners see the logic of cooperating with Northern Alliance. In the crucial meeting on October 30, 2001, between the U.S. theatre commander, Gen. Tommy Franks, and the Northern Alliance, an agreement was reached on cooperation between the two. In the subsequent nine days, the Northern Alliance was able to capture Mazar-e-Sharif, and reach the outskirts of Kabul. During this Northern Alliance

campaign, nine battalions of the Pakistani armed forces were either decimated or made to flee southwards to safer places. One version of the events was that Pakistani GHQ in Rawalpindi issued orders to its men to rush back to safer places. If this is true, the exodus of so-called Taliban soldiers from Mazar-e-Sharif, Kabul and other areas in early November 2001, as Northern Alliance troops marched in can be attributed to it.

By this time everyone associated with the Northern Alliance including the U.S. itself realised what good fighters the Northern Alliance men were and started admiring Masood's vision in training such a formidable force. On November 13, against the protests from Pakistan, Northern Alliance troops entered Kabul. India on the success of its subtle diplomacy immediately announced the reopening of the Embassy in Kabul.

On the Government that should come in Kabul after the fall of the Taliban, India and the Afghan neighbourhood (with the exception of Pakistan) had well defined objectives from the beginning — it should not have any Taliban or any of its allies/friends/sympathisers anywhere near the corridors of power.

Though some of the extra regional powers and Pakistan try to make the Taliban movement synonymous with the Pashtuns, India always refused to buy this theory. In fact, the Indian debate during that period was that there were lots of groups among the Pashtuns who opposed the Taliban from the beginning. Instead of looking at Afghanistan through the spectrum of ethnicity, all the forces that opposed the Taliban-type of rule should be in the new Government; it should be as broad-based as possible.

This concern remains even now. India should make a long term investment in ensuring that a Taliban-type of government never comes to power again in Afghanistan. In whichever sector the present Afghan Government seeks help, India should respond positively.

(The writer is a Visiting Professor, School of International Studies, JNU.)

THE HINDU

7 MAR 2003

Don't Blame America

On Monday in Parliament, prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee made a complaint and a confession. But neither helped to reassure the nation that his government has a carefully thought out strategy in place to deal with its western neighbour. The target of Atalji's moan — not for the first time — was Washington, which he said, had failed to pressurise Islamabad into curbing its export of cross-border terrorism. This continuing US inability, despite promises to the contrary, said the prime minister, "exposes its weakness". It also means that New Delhi might have to rethink its policies on how to deal with Islamabad. Implicit in Atalji's lament was the sorry acknowledgement that New Delhi had made a serious error of judgment about the nature of the American-led war against terrorism. In the wake of 9/11, it lulled itself into believing that with the US promising to fight terror globally, it was only a matter of time before Islamabad was forced to wind up its undeclared proxy war against India. In other words, Atalji's disappointment is a function of his own government's unrealistic expectations. As the recent deportation from Pakistan of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed — the alleged mastermind behind 9/11 — suggests, the US will not act against Islamabad as long as the latter cooperates with Washington's own continuing war against Al-Qaida and the remnants of the Taliban.

There are obvious lessons in all this for our policy makers. First, to reiterate an old cliché, in international geo-politics nothing is what it seems. America's concerns on terrorism are manifestly not the same as ours. And secondly, placing all one's eggs in one geo-political basket — in this case, America's ostensible war against terrorism — makes for poor strategy. While India must continue to seek US help in containing Islamabad, it must do so in the knowledge that this help is not a substitute for an independent and credible strategy of its own. In this context, it is welcome that Atalji has promised to take "the middle path" on Iraq, implicitly rejecting the view that whole-hearted support for the US might translate into long-term strategic gains. At the same time, much remains to be done in terms of communicating our stand clearly to the US — and not just at the diplomatic level. Trade and business leaders from India can convey the potentially disastrous economic fall-out of the war to their US counterparts. The idea is not just to convey our opposition to the war as widely as possible, but also to influence American policy at every possible level. Don't blame America; come to terms with it.

5 MAR 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

PM for 'middle path' on Iraq crisis

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Stateaman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 3. — As war clouds gather over Iraq, Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee today invoked the spirit of the Non-Aligned Movement in the Lok Sabha to reiterate his government's opposition to any extreme step and called for a "middle-of-the-path approach" to resolve the Iraq stalemate.

Mr Vajpayee also assured the House that the country was prepared to meet any eventuality and arrangements had been made to evacuate all Indian nationals from the Gulf.

"I have been asking visiting foreign dignitaries to India of late, if they think there would be a war between the USA and Iraq. Nobody told me there would be no war," said Mr Vajpayee, who had just returned after attending the NAM summit in Kuala Lumpur, indicating the inevitability of war in the region.

He, however, rejected demands by some Opposition members for adopting a res-

Sparring over statistics



Mr Vajpayee and Mrs Gandhi: Fighting for the jobless

NEW DELHI, March 3. — Gleeeful Lok Sabha members watched as the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition sparred briefly after the latter took a dig at the government for making tall claims on the creation of job opportunities for the unemployed.

As Mr Vajpayee rattled off figures showing his government had provided 72 lakh jobs in the previous year, Mrs Gandhi intervened to remind him of his government's poll promise to provide jobs to one crore people every year. "By now there should have been 3.5 crore jobs," Ms Gandhi said. Taken aback, Mr Vajpayee quipped: "When the government said that it would give one crore jobs, it did not mean that it would call in one crore people and give them jobs". But after Opposition members insisted that the PM give a proper reply, he said during the past three years 84 lakh, 79 lakh and 72 lakh jobs were created. He chided the Opposition. "What sort of politics is this? If the government says people are getting jobs, you say that they are not. You can't challenge official figures." — SNS

olution on the impending conflict. When members wanted to know India's

stand on the issue, Mr Vajpayee retorted: "How can you say India has aban-

doned the Non-Aligned Movement? I am aware of Somnathji and his party's (CPI-M) views on war. They can go to any extent. But we (the government) are not ready to go that far. Some middle of the path approach has to be found to deal with the impending situation," the Prime Minister said.

The Prime Minister was replying to the motion of thanks to the President's address to the joint session of Parliament. The motion was passed unanimously, though some of the amendments moved by the Opposition were rejected. Mr Vajpayee also hinted that efforts were on by various countries to prevent the world from becoming unipolar. "Efforts are on to create a multipolar world," he said, in a reference to diplomatic efforts underway to stave off a possible US attack on Iraq.

Coming to criticism of the President's address on food security, drought and unemployment, he invited suggestions from the Opposition to eliminate hunger.

4 MAR 2003

THE STATESMAN

Govt Prepared To Meet Any Eventuality, Uneasy With Idea Of Unipolar World

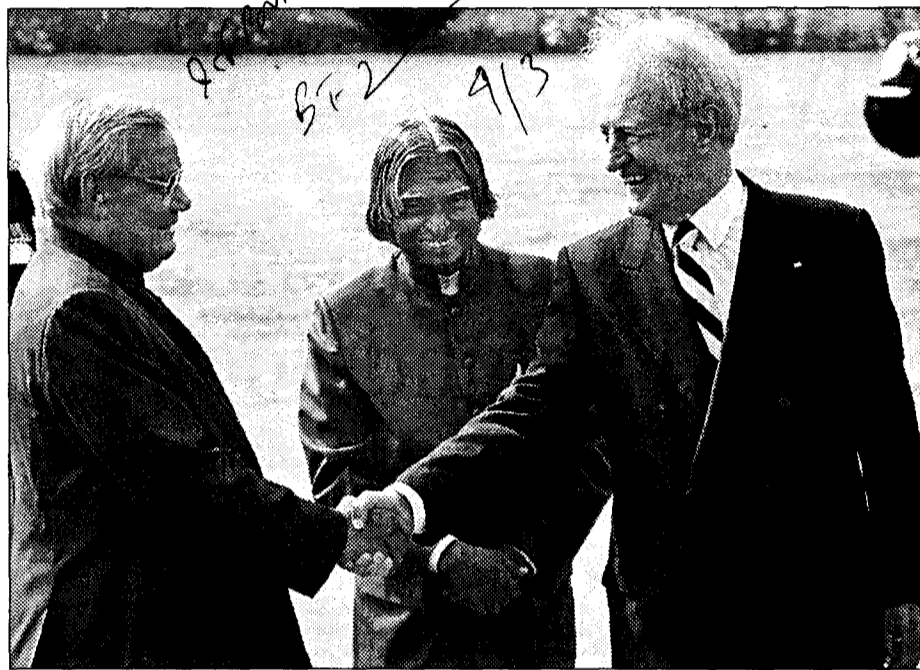
India to stay neutral on Iraq, says PM

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 3 MARCH

PRIME Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, on Monday, said India will stay neutral on the US plan to invade Iraq. Replying to the debate on President's address to the joint sitting in the Lok Sabha, the PM said the government was prepared to meet any eventuality, including the evacuation of about 4 million expatriates, that might arise out of the war which looks imminent.

Mr Vajpayee outlined his government's posture towards the looming war, saying: "We will follow the madhyam marg." Though he didn't elaborate on the reasons behind the intention to stay neutral, his reply indicated that disillusionment with the US could be one of the influencing factors. "The US has failed to get Pakistan deliver on its promises. It is a sign of its weakness and we will have to factor this into our policy making," he said.

The PM also seemed to share the uneasiness with a unipolar world. At the same time, he categorically told CPM's Somnath Chatterjee that his government couldn't go the length of the Left in opposing the US war plans. "We are aware of your views. But the world has changed and we have to take our interests into ac-



FRIENDLY NATION: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee greets German President Johannes Rau while President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam looks on during a ceremonial welcome in New Delhi on Monday. — AP

count while framing our response," the Prime Minister said.

Mr Vajpayee devoted a good part of his 45-minute speech in dealing with foreign policy-related questions. Defending his policy vis-à-vis Pakistan, Mr Vajpayee strongly rebutted the impression that the continued tension

with Pakistan along with the speculation that it could lead to a nuclear conflagration was a deterrent to foreign investors.

"This is wrong," he said, pointing to the inflow of \$28 billion in foreign investment in the last financial year and reminding the House that it equalled the total

forex reserves in 1998 when he began his first term. The Prime Minister justified the mobilisation in the aftermath of the December 13 Parliament attack. "We don't want war. But the provocation was such as to warrant an extraordinary response and we couldn't have appeared wanting.

Germany for peaceful solution to Gulf crisis

Our Delhi Bureau
NEW DELHI 3 MARCH

GERMANY on Monday reiterated that the Iraq crisis should be resolved using peaceful means. Addressing a business session on "Indo-German Economic Relations in a Globalised World", jointly organised by Ficci and CII, German president Johannes Rau said: "India and Germany share the view that everything must be tried to fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions using peaceful, political means."

Mr Rau said that weapons of mass destruction should be eliminated and Iraq should strictly comply with the terms of UN Security Council resolution 1441.

He added: "All eyes are at present watching the situation in Iraq with considerable concern. Opinions differ on the best means to preserve peace and stability but there is no difference of opinion as regards the objective." The German president sought closer cooperation between Asia and Europe. He recognised India's increasingly active role in world affairs and said Germany was keen to deepen bilateral ties both in business and science. "Whether in politics, business, science or social development, we need to work together and learn from each other," he said asserting that this in turn would ensure the success of globalisation.

Stating that bilateral cooperation was far from exhausted, he said sectors like information technology and science were important areas of bilateral cooperation. While graduates from India's elite universities were among the most sought after recruits in the global high tech business, he said his country will be delighted to have more software specialists from India which appeared at present to be more attracted to the United States.

Terming scientific research as an important foundation for economic success, he said the scientific cooperation between the two countries was exemplary.

4 MAR 2003

The Economic Times

Delhi on war middle path

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Feb. 27: India might not approve of the American policy on Iraq, but is careful not to take a stand that could marginalise it in post-Saddam Hussein Baghdad.

At the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Kuala Lumpur, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had expressed displeasure over the US role in Iraq. Referring to reports on North Korea's nuclear programme, Vajpayee made it clear that there should be no "double-standards" while dealing with weapons of mass destruction.

Indications are that the Indian foreign policy establishment is still trying to formulate its policy on the fast-paced developments in Iraq. Much of what Vajpayee said in Malaysia, therefore, should be seen in the domestic context.

In the backdrop of the Assembly elections in some states, the BJP does not want to be seen as toeing the US line too closely. Moreover, with the budget session of Parliament on, it does not want to provide detractors, within and outside the ruling coalition, a handle to embarrass it.

However, Indian officials and foreign policy experts stress that India's stand on Iraq should be based on "pragmatism". A senior official clarified that Delhi was no longer willing to carry

"the baggage of the Cold War days". The Indian stand should be based on what serves its national interests best, rather than on ideology of the past, he said.

The new thrust of India's policy was also reflected in the recently concluded Nam summit.

As a result of the initiative taken by India and some other countries, the Nam resolution drives home the point that Saddam would have to "comply fully" with the Security Council resolution and satisfy the world that it does not possess any weapon of mass destruction.

India also deliberately urged developing nations to engage with the West even as Malaysian Prime Minister and Nam chairman Mahathir Mohammed decided to play to the gallery with his fiery anti-American speech and frequent barbs at Washington's fight against global terrorism.

India emphasised that it supports a peaceful resolution of the crisis, was against unilateralism and would like the Security Council to take a final decision on Iraq.

The US could live with the Indian position. That the US has introduced a second resolution in the Security Council and has so far remained engaged with the UN could be argued in certain quarters as evidence that Washington was also against unilateral action.

28 FEB 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

'OTHERS HAVE NO INTEREST IN KASHMIR'

India cannot support U.S. war moves, says PM

By Amit Baruah

KUALA LUMPUR, FEB. 25. India cannot support the American war moves on Iraq and the United Nations is being severely tested on account of the continuing crisis, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, said here today.

Addressing a press conference, he said: "the U.S. role is such that it cannot be supported. We will decide what we have to do next after seeing what form the war will take."

Asked whether NAM could do anything to deter the U.S. from going to war, Mr. Vajpayee said that people's opinions did count, especially in democratic countries. "The demonstrations against war have been so huge, I don't think it would have had no impact on the U.S. President, George W. Bush, and other leaders. But the strength that is required is not yet in evidence."

Mr. Vajpayee said that the U.S. and those opposed to any unilateral action were still engaged in the U.N. Security Council.

Supporting these efforts, he said there could be no two views that a way out should be sought till the last moment, war averted and Iraq shown the correct path.

And if Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMD), there should be a ban on them, the Prime Minister said. But, the question arose why the WMD issue should be raised only in relation to Iraq.

"Don't others have such weapons?" The attitude adopted towards North Korea did not reveal that world leaders had a clear path before them. "There can be no differing standards".

On the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's statement that it needed two hands to clap, vis-à-vis Indo-Pak. relations, Mr. Vajpayee said:

J. Foreign Policy
"Tali nahin bajti to chutki baja lain" (if we can't clap, then we can at least click our fingers). "There should be some sound all the time."

He said he did not know what had been the experience of Gen. Musharraf during his meetings with NAM leaders, but his talks were confined to Iraq. There were talks on Pakistan as well and it was clear that other countries had "no interest" in Kashmir. All countries said that it was a bilateral matter and India and Pakistan should settle it.

The clear-cut statement from Malaysia against raising bilateral issues in NAM should open the eyes of the Pakistanis, Mr. Vajpayee said.

There was no link, no comparison between the Kashmir and Palestine issues. NAM would die if bilateral disputes were injected into it.

He admitted that because of the Iraq issue, there was considerable 'jaan' (life) in this summit. NAM was formed with the objective of stopping a world war and prodding nations to move away from military blocs and adopt an independent foreign policy.

Pointing out that the world stood on the verge of a war, Mr. Vajpayee was categorical that in this situation there was need for NAM. Before coming to the summit, he felt that the organisation might be divided on Iraq, but now it appeared that this would not happen.

Many countries, he said, believed that Iraq should accept the NAM proposal and move forward. If NAM spoke out fearlessly then it would be in a position to put off war and strengthen the constituency of peace.

The Prime Minister preferred not to respond to a question on the Ayodhya issue.

Musharraf's stand: Page 11

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2003

9 of Politics

UNADDRESSED CONCERNS *x9-10 2/21/2*

THE VAJPAYEE GOVERNMENT'S evident reluctance to take a categorical position against a U.S.-led war on Iraq and its marked hesitation in articulating a clear policy before the country's Parliament on a matter of grave international importance and import are symptoms of the paralysis that is afflicting foreign policy. But for stray, casual comments from the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, the Government has kept the country in the dark about its policy on an issue that has been agitating the international community for weeks and seen millions pour out on to the streets to demonstrate in different capitals around the world. Instead of utilising the opportunity of a debate in Parliament to pass a resolution that would have added India's powerful voice for the cause of peace and reflected the overwhelming national sentiment, the Government chose to shy away on the plea that the Prime Minister needed "flexibility" when he attends the summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement next week.

There are strong reservations in this country against unilateralism in international relations and apprehensions over the attempts to undermine the authority of the United Nations. Without addressing these, the Prime Minister made a bland, all-embracing statement that he is against war "anywhere" and that it should be the last resort. The ambivalence was equally evident in the Finance Minister's response. The Government's position remained that a "war should be avoided", stated Jaswant Singh, standing in for the External Affairs Minister, when speaking Parliament. New Delhi's position was guided by its belief in maintaining the U.N.'s relevance in matters relating to international security, the need to implement the resolution on disarming Iraq, avert a humanitarian crisis and maintain international and regional stability. The weapons inspectors should have the opportunity to complete their task in Iraq,

he said but added that the U.N. Security Council could not be expected to wait indefinitely to secure Iraqi compliance. The rider's inclusion was incomprehensible. If the objective was to please the sole superpower, it exposed the hollowness of the stated policy.

A Government that has surrendered its independence of action finds its voice muted. Its response has to some extent gone politically unchallenged, helped by a surprising lack of mobilisation on the street. The position in India contrasts with the response elsewhere in the region and in Europe. The Arab world's divisions continue to bedevil the region, with the seething anger in the Arab street put down by repressive regimes. But it is in Europe that the developments over Iraq are leaving their imprint most dramatically. The spontaneous anti-war protests in Europe signal major changes in trans-Atlantic relations. They portend a chasm developing between the Western allies of Cold War vintage, ironically France and Germany leading the rebel camp. The two sides have drifted apart since the Cold War's end. Europe, led by the two bitter enemies of World War II, has slowly turned its face against the anarchic world where power was the ultimate determinant of security — and has come up against the only remaining votary of power politics, Washington. The leaders of France and Germany have surprised the world and brought cheer to the liberal international community by standing up against the militarism of the Bush administration, laying emphasis on negotiation, diplomacy and international law and rejecting use of force and unilateralism in global relations. But the scars of this clash will undoubtedly remain, with the very real possibility that for the first time in a century the warmth in the trans-Atlantic relationship may never return. In this context, the contrast with India's current low-profile reticence could not be sharper.

THE HINDU

21 FEB 2003

'War should be last option'

By Amit Baruah

J.F. Puri
NEW DELHI, FEB. 19. India today said that the weapons inspectors of the United Nations must have the full opportunity to complete their task in Iraq, but equally the U.N. Security Council could not be "expected to wait indefinitely" to secure "immediate, active and unconditional cooperation" under Resolution 1441.

Replying to a discussion on Iraq in the Lok Sabha, the Union Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, said that the BJP-led Government's position remained that a "war should be avoided" and that all the parties must cooperate to find a peaceful resolution to the issue. Filling in for the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, who is in Russia, Mr. Singh's response did not satisfy the Opposition members, who demanded that New Delhi take a categorical position against war in West Asia.

Mr. Singh did not respond to the repeated Opposition suggestion that the House pass a resolution on Iraq, but the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, said the Government had to retain flexibility on the issue.

A majority of the members who spoke during

H.O. 1 2002
the debate were extremely critical of the United States, and none supported military action against Iraq. Many of them pointed to the large, cross-continent anti-war demonstrations. Stating that wars and conflicts were "always the last option," Mr. Singh said that Iraq had to faithfully comply with the Security Council resolutions. "At the same time, on a matter of grave international importance, further action should be based on the broadest possible international consensus and it should be the Security Council that should decide on what further action needs to be taken."

New Delhi's position was guided by its belief in maintaining the U.N.'s relevance in matters relating to international security, the need to implement Resolution 1441, avert a humanitarian crisis in Iraq and the importance of maintaining international and regional stability.

It was also guided by India's vital political, economic and security interests in the region, including the security and welfare of the large Indian diaspora in the Gulf, and the traditionally strong economic ties with Iraq, which had weakened on account of the U.N. sanctions, Mr. Singh stressed.

No war anywhere, says PM: Page 12

THE HINDU

20 FEB 2003

Govt against resolution on Iraq

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb. 18. — The government today appeared less than keen on having a parliamentary resolution on Iraq. Opposition parties have asked for a resolution.

The Lok Sabha will discuss the Iraq situation tomorrow. The government's parliamentary managers areaverse to a parliamentary resolution because "it may bind the government when it requires flexibility", a senior BJP leader said.

The first option would be to avoid a resolution. But if one is adopted, the government would try to ensure that the resolution reposed full faith in the government in order to deal with the crisis, sources said. At a meeting of the business advisory committee of Lok Sabha today, the ruling NDA and Opposition could not agree on the issue of tabling a resolution. The Congress reportedly suggested that the government could have a loosely-worded resolution, to allow it to have flexible options in case of an emergency situation. The Left parties, however, insisted on a tough resolution, sources said.

The Opposition alleged that the government was back-tracking from a commitment the parliamentary affairs minister, Mrs Sushma Swaraj, gave them that the government would cooperate with the opposition in passing a unanimous resolution opposing US war moves against Iraq. At the BAC meeting, the CPI-M leader Mr Somnath Chatterjee demanded a commitment from the gov-

ernment on the resolution. He was backed by the Congress chief Whip Mr Priyaranjan Das Munshi, and leaders of the other opposition parties.

Sources said representatives of at least two NDA partners — Samata Party and Trinamul Congress, also favoured a resolution. They felt it was important for the Indian Parliament to come out with a resolution which will reflect the growing anti-war sentiments throughout the world.

When the government refused to agree, Mr Shivraj Patil reportedly tried to broker peace by suggesting that the Opposition will agree to the government framing the wording of the resolution. While sharing concerns of Opposition members on a war on Iraq, Mrs Swaraj told the Rajya Sabha today that the government was willing for a detailed discussion on the issue but not to the demand for a parliamentary resolution. She said, any such resolution would bind the government on a situation that was still evolving.

Vajpayee backs UN: At a meeting of the BJP parliamentary party this morning, the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, cautioned everyone from talking on Iraq, as it was a sensitive matter, and urged that only those authorised to speak on the matter be allowed to speak.

He said that any decision on Iraq should be decided by the UNSC and nothing should be done to make the world body "ineffective". Expressing concern over the deteriorating situation in the Gulf, Mr Vajpayee said most countries with whom India was in touch were against war. The Prime Minister repeated the government's



CPI-M workers carry an effigy of Mr George Bush during a protest rally in Amritsar on Tuesday. — AFP

DD crew Iraq-bound

NEW DELHI, Feb. 18. — Doordarshan may be going to cover the war events in Iraq in case war breaks out in Iraq, but the performance of the Indian cricket team in the World Cup — the war without the fighting — suggests that its revenues will not be the maximum expected.

DD director-general Mr SY Qureshi said DD teams would go to the

stand that was outlined in the President's address to Parliament yesterday, officials in the PMO said. Any action outside the framework of the UN against Iraq would be "unfortunate", and should the UNSC endorse unilateral action against Iraq, it would erode the moral authority of the world body, the Prime Minister said.

"Majority of the countries do not want war and those we talked to are against it. We have to ensure that UN doesn't become ineffective and lose its moral authority," he said.

Gulf on 25 February to cover the events in Iraq in case war breaks out. Veteran journalists will work for DD, which has a good viewership in the Gulf. He said news bulletins in Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam had been introduced on DD India and bulletins in Gujarati and Bengali would be introduced soon. — SNS

corrupt officials.

Attack on Iraq will make UN ineffective: PM

11-5 TIMES NEWS NETWORK 1912

New Delhi: Obfuscation marked India's Iraq policy on Tuesday, with the government seeking to soften the impact of anti-war statements made by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in a meeting of BJP MPs earlier in the day.

Briefing the media, BJP spokesman V.K. Malhotra said that Mr Vajpayee had told the MPs that if the US took a unilateral action against Iraq, it would render the UN "ineffective". And that if the UN succumbed to US pressure, that would result in the "moral death" of the UN.

By the end of the day, however, the government spun into action with a toned-down version of the PM's remarks. In a formal denial, the PMO said that Mr Vajpayee had merely "repeated to party MPs what was contained in the address of the President to parliament"—that "any action outside the framework of the UN against Iraq would be unfortunate for the international community and would erode the moral authority of the UN".

The "gap" in communication was attributed to a faulty translation from Hindi, the language in which the PM spoke, and it was emphasised that the two did not contradict each other, it was "only a question of nuances".

Confusion plagued the government's Iraq stand in parliament too, where, after initially agreeing to a joint parliamentary resolution on India's opposition to a US-led war, the Vajpayee government got cold feet.

Expressing the government's view in the House on Monday, parliamentary affairs minister Sushma Swaraj said a joint resolution would "tie the government's hands" before the forthcoming nonaligned summit and deprive it of "elbow room" on the subject.

Opposition members in the RS referred to the massive anti-war rallies around the world against the US' unilateral actions. They sought a unanimous resolution against the US plans, but the government maintained that while it was ready for a discussion, a resolution was not acceptable.

The BJP's line is that it would prefer

to have a discussion on Iraq in parliament so that the views of Indian political parties can be heard. It does not want a joint parliament resolution to tie the government down to a position which it may wish to amend before a possible second UN resolution, BJP sources stressed. These sources added that it was the Congress's Shivraj Patil and Priyaranjan Das Munshi who pointed out the pitfalls of a joint resolution to the government at a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee.

The Left parties, on the other hand, who were the keenest to have the joint resolution, said the government's backtracking on the issue was in keeping with the neutral tone of the President's address to parliament.

After the RS question hour, senior Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee raised the issue saying that developments in West Asia impinged on the nation's oil security with the price of oil soaring up to \$39 a barrel. "We have very friendly relations with Iraq and we deplore the conflict in the region," said Mr Mukherjee.

THE TELEGRAPH

19 FEB 2003

Delhi sets Nam terms

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Feb. 18: The Prime Minister may not be averse to shaking Pervez Musharraf's hand if they happen to meet at the Non-Aligned Movement summit later this week in Kuala Lumpur, but he will not allow any attempt to introduce Kashmir or any "conflict resolution" into the summit agenda.

Foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal said a categorical "no" to the likelihood of an exclusive meeting between Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the Pakistani President on the Nam sidelines.

Officials at South Block, however, said if Musharraf does walk up to Vajpayee to shake his hand, then the Prime Minister will not turn his head away.

Vajpayee will leave for the Malaysian capital on February 22. Musharraf, as also the heads of governments of 115 member countries, too, will attend the summit, where the developments in Iraq and a likely US-led military action will be the focus of discussion.

According to indications, a strong statement with emphasis on multilateralism, as opposed to unilateralism, will come out at the summit. A war in Iraq will affect not only its immediate region but also the entire world as also oil prices, making the issue one of the main topics of discussion at the coming summit.

Vajpayee is scheduled to address on Saturday a Nam business summit, the first ever business meet of the movement. This indicates that economic issues and a stress on closer and stronger economic cooperation among Nam members will also be a key focus.

If Pakistan tries to raise Kashmir at the summit, it will not be a surprise for India. The Indian camp is more worried about a likely move by host Malaysia to initiate a discussion on the India-Pakistan dispute.

According to Nam tradition, the final document or "declaration" is adopted by consensus. So India can prevent an issue from being part of the final document if it does not want it included.

Pakistan and the others, however, can still embarrass India by raising the issue at the summit just as South Africa had raised the South Asian nuclear test in 1999.

Sibal said with 115 countries as members, there was bound to be differences of opinion in the Nam on various issues. He emphasised that the focus of Nam should be on "global issues".

"Any attempt to steer it away from them to 'intra-Nam' or 'conflict resolution' is not good for the movement," Sibal said. Not just Kashmir, but a host of other territorial disputes and intra-Nam issues, especially in Africa, would seriously dilute the movement's focus if discussed at the summit and detract from other important developments calling for a united Nam stand, he said.

It is likely that Pakistan may try to slip in the Kashmir issue when global terrorism is discussed. It may again try to use the "root cause" of terrorism to try and draw a distinction between "terrorists" and "freedom fighters", in the Kashmir context.

19 FEB 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2003

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ENTRENCHED NEGATIVISM HP-10 18/2 ✓

THE ENTRENCHED ATTITUDE of negativism towards some of India's neighbours, that has been the hallmark of the political dispensation ruling in New Delhi, has once again been manifested in the address delivered by the President, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, to the joint sitting of Parliament at the start of the budget session. The formulations in respect of Pakistan and Bangladesh contained in the President's address, which reflects the view of the Government, demonstrates that New Delhi has yet to cultivate a sober attitude towards the countries in the neighbourhood and develop a creative new approach on that basis. In regard to Pakistan, the address made for yet another exercise of an unduly prolonged effort to establish that the chief threat to India's internal security came from this external source. With references to the killing of innocents, the targeting of the families of security personnel and attacks on pilgrims, the conclusion was drawn that all of this showed that there was a method in the madness of Pakistan-supported terrorist violence. It was observed that the assurances given by Pakistan on the issue had remained unfulfilled, that the infrastructure of terrorism remained intact in that country and that Islamabad continued to fund terrorist groups. The nation was urged to be vigilant against an adversary which was described as one that was unwilling to give up its anti-India stand.

Bangladesh appears to have made itself an unwitting target of the animosity which New Delhi bears towards Pakistan in that cross-border infiltration from this direction — which is largely undertaken by those in search of a living — was described as having an additional dimension of the ominous because Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence was said to be active in the territory of the eastern neighbour. There is a strong hint of prejudice in the fact that the ruling dispensation in New Delhi has picked on these two neighbouring states because a majority of their populations are made up of people belonging to a particular religious faith.

Since the policy towards Pakistan has been

frozen in a negative mode, the strong words against that country were not unexpected. It is less easy to understand the harsh words used against Bangladesh at a juncture when that country's Foreign Minister, Mohammed Morshed Khan, had just concluded talks with the top echelons of the Indian political leadership which were uniformly described as "candid" and "cordial". The use of such terminology had suggested that Mr. Khan had given a patient hearing to the Indian leadership when it raised all matters of concern and as much had been confirmed by the Minister for External Affairs, Yashwant Sinha, who felt it apt to compliment his Bangladesh counterpart for adopting a constructive and positive approach. New Delhi does have a right to expect that Bangladesh would actively address issues such as illegal immigration, the presence within it of insurgent groups that claim they are advancing the interests of the people of the north-eastern States, the alleged use of its soil by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence to mount anti-India operations and the existence of religion-based militant groups that have an anti-India tilt. But the Government should not fail to note that Bangladesh's systems are not structurally perfect and should try to understand that Dhaka cannot instantaneously respond to the demands made on it. Bangladesh had professed its interest in a productive relationship with India but the tone taken in the address could well have the effect of setting off a slide back to the tensions that vitiated the atmosphere earlier this month.

During his stay in India, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister did point to the need for mutual respect among nations. India's neighbours are already convinced that New Delhi, on account of its size, often acts as if it does not have any respect or regard for them. Such an approach on India's part significantly more sharp-edged now contributes to the animosity that its neighbours bear towards it. Self-interest as well as principle should dictate that New Delhi quickly shed its overbearing attitude.

18 FEB 2003

THE HINDU

Differences in Sangh Parivar over war

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 11. There are strong differences in the Sangh Parivar on the possibility of a U.S.-led war on Iraq. The RSS chief, K.S. Sudershan, feels that the Government's position of opposing a war is correct, but the Vishwa Hindu Parishad international general secretary, Pravin Togadia, would like to see the Government support a U.S.-led war.

"What if there is no proof of Iraqi complicity in terrorism, we are not talking about justice... we are talking about the clash of civilisations," Mr. Togadia said. He added that Indian businessmen and traders could make money in the "post-war construction boom in Iraq".

The VHP opposed 'jehadi' terrorism and radical Islam. Hence, it opposed Iraq, a Muslim country. That was the "logic" of Mr.

Togadia's argument at a press conference here today. "We could not get to Islamabad via Kargil, we can get to Islamabad via Baghdad."

He preferred to dodge the question whether he and the VHP also saw a "clash" between "Christian civilisation" and India, saying that "at present, the active clash was between 'jehadi' terrorism and the rest of the world" and that India should be on the side of the U.S., which would lead the attack on Iraq.

In an interview to *Panchjanya*, an RSS mouthpiece, Mr. Sudershan said that Iraq had been a friend of India, it had supported India on the Kashmir issue and sold oil to India at lower prices and that India should, under no circumstances, join or support the U.S. attempt to start a war against Iraq. "If the U.S. was serious about tackling terrorism, it would have acted against Pakis-

tan first," the RSS chief said.

On the Ram temple issue, Mr. Togadia warned that if the Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura issues were not sorted out by the Muslim community, the VHP-led agitation would open up the issue of "30,000 temples destroyed during the Mughal period". He said that the VHP wanted not just a part of the acquired land in Ayodhya be handed over to its trust, "but all of the 67 acres" before 6 p.m. on February 23.

Asked what he had to say about the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's reported annoyance with him for talking about a "fight to the finish ('aar paar ki la-dayi') if the February 23 deadline was not met, Mr. Togadia said "the Prime Minister does not have a registered patent on the phrase". Mr. Vajpayee had used the phrase with reference to Pakistan when Indian troops were amassed on the border.

Govt mulls arresting Bhat

Udayan Namboodiri
New Delhi, February 8

THE CONFESSION of Anjum Zamrud Habib, the woman arrested outside the Pakistani mission in New Delhi on Thursday night with money and incriminating documents before the Pota judge on Friday forced the Government to consider the possibilities of arresting Hurriyat chairman Abdul Ghani Bhat.

Is Bhat a recipient of Pakistan High Commission largesse? On Friday, Anjum has damned Bhat — long believed to be a moderate. Anjum was picked up after a raid at their Malva Nagar office, along with Hurriyat spokesman Shabir Ahmed Dar, Delhi chief of Hurriyat's Kashmir Awareness Bureau and leader of Hurriyat constituent, Muslim Kawateen-e-Markaz.

Anjum had been visiting the Pakistani mission regularly under Bhat's instructions. The Hurriyat chairman had apparently assured her she would not be suspected by the Indian security agencies, who watch all those who do business with the Pakistani High Commission, because she was a woman.

The Centre is considering all options before taking steps against Bhat. The Mufti Mohammad Sayeed government in Srinagar is being consulted. Sources said New Delhi is sensitive to the leader's popular image, and, with Id just days away, it would like to avoid a showdown.

The Hurriyat, sources said, is now seeing its popularity nosedive rapidly. A bandh called on Friday to protest against the Centre's move on arrested leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani received a lukewarm response in the Valley. Meanwhile, the J&K Government has only this week extended an offer to the Hurriyat for talks.



A file photograph of Pakistan's charge d'affaires Jaiil Abbas Jilani and his wife. Jilani was expelled by India on Saturday.

BJP welcomes envoys' expulsion

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 8

THE BJP on Saturday welcomed the Government's move to expel Islamabad's charge d'affaires in New Delhi, Jaiil Abbas Jilani and four other officials for their role in handing funds to terrorist groups operating in the country.

Terming the Government's response as "appropriate", party

spokesman Vijay Kumar Malhotra said the Pakistan High Commission had for long been "a hub of ISI activities" in India. Ob-serving that it was a matter of concern that Pakistan continued to sponsor cross-border terrorism, Malhotra stated that the Government must contemplate more stringent steps against the country's mission here if it did not stop its nefarious activities. The BJP leader also felt that if

'Every right to expel if charges are true'

THE CONGRESS on Friday backed the Government's decision to expel New Delhi-based Pakistan's charge d'affaires Jaiil Abbas Jilani and four other staffers of the High Commission saying "India has every right to expel Jilani if allegations against him are true".

Reacting to the development, party spokesperson Abishek Singhvi said, "if the allegations are correct, then it is very serious. Such allegations are based on definite facts which lie with the Government. And if the allegations are correct, there is no other option before the Government but to expel the diplomat."

Asked whether Pakistan High Commission should be closed, Singhvi said this was for the Government to decide. "We believe that all efforts should be made to keep open all channels of communication." Reacting to Pakistan's allegation that the Government's decision was taken with an eye on Assembly election in four States, he expressed the hope that the decision was based on facts.

HTC, New Delhi

NEWS ANALYSIS

Centre's move may shift focus on Pak

Arun Joshi
Jammu, February 8

EVEN THOUGH the Centre may have been mulling the arrest of Hurriyat chairman Abdul Ghani Bhat, in its attempt to keep up the heat on Islamabad's charge d'affaires Zahir Abbas Jilani's complicity in the funds transfer to the Valley, any action against Bhat may be self-defeating for the government.

Sources said that the idea is not to shift the spotlight from the hub of trouble point—Pakistan High Commission, nor the capital, Islamabad's role in funding separatist organisations and terrorists has been clearly established, sources said, with the disclosures of the two Hurriyat activists caught with money outside the Pakistani mission in Delhi.

"The whole thing has been transparent and the Delhi police have enough evidence to pin down Pakistan High Commission's senior functionary," sources disclosed. "Delhi police records are full of evidence against the diplomat."

Any action against Bhat, who was named by the two arrested in Delhi on Thursday, can be interpreted in the manner that obliterates Pakistani role in nexus, sources said.

Pakistan High Commission's role in offering guidance and funding had increased after other channels of funding were sealed from December 2001 to May 2002 with the arrest of key modules. This was becoming a major source of widening network of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, sources revealed.

"This was the second time this year when Pakistani mission's role in funding separatist organisations has come

to light. First, it was on January 31, when Mohammad Shafi Reshi of the Democratic Freedom Movement was arrested — and later let off because there were no substantial recoveries — though he admitted he had met Gilani and discussed matters. This time around, there were substantial recoveries and the confession by the accused in the court.

The purpose of stopping the funding channels of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, sources believe, was that neither the High Commission, nor Kashmiri separatist leaders, would dare to engage in such activities again.

Rubbishing the charge, Bhat said: "Pakistan doesn't finance us. We're leading a movement for the Kashmiri people. It was a clear game to malign us."

The Hurriyat leader said he would soon expose the purpose of the character assassination. "Let the heat die down and I'll tell you what it was all about."

Meanwhile, the APHC sees naming of its leaders in such episodes as a matter of witch-hunt by the Government against the Kashmiri people. The Hurriyat sources said that the secessionist conglomerate would not be cowed down by such smear campaign.

The APHC may rebut any suggestion of bilateral talks as part of its strategy to counter what it calls "brutal character assassination of its leaders by the Government of India". The outfit, sources said, would stay away from the negotiating table because of the continuing "harassment" of its leaders. The Hurriyat is holding strategy sessions to evolve an effective counter the Government's malicious campaign.

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TERRORISM / INDIA RAISES CAMPAIGN TO NEW PITCH.

Ostracise countries flouting U.N. resolutions: Advani

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, FEB. 4. India has raised its 'anti-terror' campaign against Pakistan to a new pitch by calling upon the international community to go beyond the principle of sanctions and "ostracise" the states found flouting the enforceable United Nations resolutions against terrorism.

Addressing the Singapore-based Institute of South East Asian Studies, the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, L.K. Advani, today reaffirmed that India would "solve" its terrorism-related problems "on its own".

However, he said, "what I do expect from the world is that a conscious approach should be adopted by the whole world to see that those who violate the U.N. resolutions on this problem of terrorism are not given assistance by any country (and that) they are ostracised".

Delivering a punch line of this magnitude as part of India's new exercise in security-diplomacy, Mr. Advani said this was the only expectation that New Delhi had of the international community at this stage.

This, according to regional diplomats and analysts, is based on the ground reality that the latest series of the U.N.'s anti-terror resolutions are enforceable under Chapter Seven of its Charter, while the old U.N. resolutions on Kashmir, for long the staple of Pakistan's India-centric diplomacy, are not enforceable or mandatory in character.

The parallel call for the stoppage of assistance to state-sponsors of terrorism is a plea for economic sanctions by donor countries.

On the Iraq crisis, Mr. Advani

reiterated India's call for a peaceful resolution and echoed the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's suggestion that "mega powers should show mega restraint".

Stepping up the diplomatic overdrive against Islamabad, Mr. Advani labelled Pakistan a "theocracy" at its birth itself. The "global web" of "jehadi terrorism", which he linked to Taliban's Afghanistan and Pakistan, was now spreading to South East Asia, too, as reflected in the recent Bali carnage.

Illustrating his campaign against Pakistan, Mr. Advani recounted the 1999 Indian Airlines' plane hijack and said that Omar Sheikh, a British national of Pakistani descent whom New Delhi had released at that time in exchange for the liberty of the passengers, "soon found his way to Karachi from where he remitted \$ 1,00,000 to Mohammad Atta, one of the men who

planned the 11th September attack in the United States".

The same person was "investigated for complicity in the killing of (U.S. journalist) Daniel Pearl".

The world should know that "jehadi terrorism is a global web with its operational centre in our (India's as also South East Asia's) neighbourhood".

Interspersing official India's old perceptions of Pakistan with some new campaign themes, Mr. Advani spoke of Islamabad's complicity in the terror-promotive proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

"There are numerous well-documented reports of the involvement of Pakistani scientists in the transfers of nuclear technology to third countries such as North Korea.

Similarly, there is also evidence of transfer of missile technology by North Korea to countries in our region. All of

this is a serious worry to the Government of India."

Significantly in this overall context, Mr. Advani did not touch upon New Delhi's traditional apprehensions about China's strategic cooperation with Pakistan. Portraying the current Sino-Indian engagement in a positive light, he emphasised that the two countries had not only "kept ... the contentious issues ... to the backburner" but also sustained cooperation on other subjects. The BJP and the Communist Party of China, too, were maintaining the practice of exchanging delegations to this day, he said. Praising Singapore's "visionary leadership" at home and in the South East Asian region, Mr. Advani indicated India's preference for comprehensive relations with this city-state in the present troubled times on the global stage.

'We are committed to secularism'

By P.S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, FEB. 4. The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, affirmed here today that India's "commitment to secularism remains absolutely unchanged" in the context of the results of the recent Assembly elections in Gujarat.

Answering questions at the end of his public lecture on "new approaches to security and development", delivered under the auspices of the Institute of South-East Asian Studies, Mr. Advani argued that the Gujarat poll results reflected a "protest vote" against the "campaign of calumny (and) disinformation unleashed" against the Gujarat Government which was now savouring a landslide election victory.

According to him, both, the Godhra carnage and the "unseemly" reaction to it were "indefensible". It was against this background that the

Gujarat Government, which was in power during the two crises, was subjected to a "campaign of calumny" and won the poll. "This does not mean, in any way, a dilution of our commitment to secularism" which "comes naturally to the Indian population", he maintained.

Asked about the continuing controversies over the Ayodhya "mandir" issue and his own role in the campaign, Mr. Advani said the fact to be noted, as done by a British writer, was that there was no incident of violence during his "rath yatra" that preceded the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992.

In any case, he added, it would not be appropriate to discuss the issue in the present forum. "The Government of India is of the view that this (Ayodhya temple) is a matter which needs to be resolved either by mutual agreement between the two communities or by court order".

POWER POLITICS

India's Quest For Great Power Status

By GURMEET KANWAL

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As is well known, India was the fountainhead of civilisation in southern Asia and from India civilisation was gradually transmitted to other areas in the region. Hinduism and Buddhism, two of the greatest religions of the world, originated in India. Since the days of Ashoka the Great, *ahimsa* or non-violence has been the dominant Indian credo. During the colonial era India made an impact on the world through its famous non-violent freedom movement. India gave the world the concept of *Panchsheel* or peaceful coexistence and was a founder member of the non-aligned movement. India has steadfastly adhered to and tirelessly advocated the fundamental principles of international peace and cooperation enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the policy of *Panchsheel* and has an impeccable track record as a peacekeeper.

World leader

Hence, in many ways, India was a world leader and a world power after its Independence and stood out among the newly independent countries for its principled championing of peace with justice and the elimination of inequities. Even as a country aggrieved by the Chinese aggression in 1962, India continued to advocate the inclusion of China in the UN.

However, after its military debacle in 1962 India appears to have turned inwards and ceased to perceive itself as a great power, or even a potential great power, with concomitant rights and responsibilities. In the view of many international analysts, consequent to the signing of the 1971 treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation with the erstwhile USSR, India ceded the moral high ground in the world arena and relegated itself to a regional or even a sub-regional player. Western analysts conveniently gloss over the fact that if India appears to have leaned on the USSR rather than the west, it is because India was given its steel plants and military equipment only by the USSR at cheap credit rates. It would be incorrect to infer that India was ever in the Soviet camp. It is only in the late 1990s that India has once again begun to see itself as a major player in the international arena and is now endeavouring to regain the strategic space that it lost during the first half-century of its Independence.

Though the Indian and the US world views appear to be irreconcilable, it is not so. In India's view, a polycentric, non-hegemonic, non-polarised world order will be inherently more stable and will be more responsive to the aspirations of the Third World. The US tends to look at the world only in terms of its own interests. Till a few years ago, the US was overly concerned with non-proliferation, particularly the NPT — an issue that has perhaps reached a stage of satura-

tion. It is now totally preoccupied with terrorism and the related chemical and biological threats. The US is not against multi-polarity as such, but is concerned about making multi-polarity safe — for itself and the rest of the world. The US needs to talk with other major powers like India and China and understand their version of multi-polarity.

Many Indian analysts are convinced that Indo-US relations will become central to India's foreign policy in the coming decades, particularly in view of India's emergence as a state with nuclear weapons. The post-Pokhran II phase of economic sanctions and technology denial that had seriously



strained the relationship fortunately lasted only a few years and the US and other western powers eventually came to terms with India's genuine security concerns and its rationale for overt nuclearisation. The belief among some Left-leaning analysts that the US will never allow India to play its rightful role in the international system is an example of exaggerated pessimism and all policy planners and opinion makers must move away from such unproductive thinking.

Neighbours

Since Chanakya's time, it has been well accepted that the foreign and security policies of a country must first take into account its relations with its neighbours. India's relations with its regional neighbours have had a chequered history since Independence and have been marked by tension and conflict. Since India has no aggressive designs, regional instabilities in the neighbourhood receive an impetus from the prevailing asymmetries. In order to eventually play its role as a great power, India must recognise the inescapable need to resolve its problems with its neighbours. Till India does so, these problems will continue to drag it down. Resolution of its problems with its neighbours will certainly enhance India's image in the eyes of the world. Foremost among these are the Kashmir issue and the long-standing terri-

torial and boundary dispute with China.

Europe fought for hundreds of years, including two world wars in the 20th century, but now has an economic union with a common currency. There is no reason why the Saarc countries cannot get together in a similar manner over the next decade or so. Free trade in South Asia is already gradually moving towards this reality. India's "look east" policy is also a welcome development. The present unipolar concentration of power in the US needs to be moderated to the extent possible, with whatever methods and modalities can be commanded. At the same time, any formal alliance or arran-

gement such as the much-touted "strategic triangle" between India, Russia and China must be rejected.

Though there is a need to build better understanding with Russia and China and other Asian countries so as to enhance security in Asia, as also to solve bilateral problems, this must be done without formal alliances. At the same time, it is inevitable that there has to be strong cooperation between India, Russia and China if the concept of collective, cooperative Asian security in the 21st century is to take shape in the vast continent of Asia.

A nation has to be both militarily and economically strong to strive for its own place in the sun and to secure for its people liberty and prosperity. Trade is quickly becoming the predominant determinant of relationships between states and India is no exception. The real reason why the world is now taking India seriously is not that it has become a great military power (in fact defence expenditure has been progressively reduced over the last 10 years), but that there is an expectation that India might continue to grow at about seven to eight per cent per annum and that it will have an impact on world trade.

While trade in commodities is still a major component of India's exports, sophisticated capital goods and software exports are gaining in the overall share — In-

dian software expertise is in great demand the world over. Value-added gems and jewellery now form a large part of India's overseas trade. India has also become a big exporter of culture in the form of entertainment products to not only the Indian diaspora worldwide but also to other people in the regional neighbourhood. However, it is in the services sector that India is likely to make its greatest mark in the coming decades because of the availability of a unique combination of trained manpower, cheap labour and an affinity for the Queen's English.

Trade

India's official and unofficial trade with the erstwhile USSR has been reduced considerably since its collapse. India's trade with China is minuscule. Japan has yet to seriously increase its economic engagement with India. The importance of Europe cannot be discounted in any discussion on India's relations with the great powers. Europe is emerging as a major centre of political, economic and military power. India's largest trading partner is not the US but the European Union as a whole. Europe is also a major source of technology for India. In 1984, India had signed an elaborate technology transfer agreement with the US; however, no technology of consequence has so far been transferred.

Though there are serious divergences between the views of Indian political parties on other issues, on foreign policy there is a broad consensus across the entire spectrum of political opinion, with differences being limited mainly to nuances and the execution of foreign policy rather than disagreements on fundamental issues. The "core" ideas and thinking that formed part of India's non-alignment, continue to be a part of India's foreign policy. India remains opposed to military alliances and power blocs. India continues to strive for time-bound total nuclear disarmament and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction as key foreign policy goals and is, hence, not supportive of discriminatory international treaties such as NPT and CTBT.

India's commitment to the resolution of disputes between nations bilaterally and without resorting to the use of force, is comprehensive and unwavering. While India is a strong votary of the UN system for ensuring a stable, just and equitable world order, India seeks its early reform, particularly the reorganisation of the Security Council, to reflect present realities, and opposes its domination by the P-5 members.

India is supportive of the movement towards the emergence of a new international economic order based on free market economies. India supports genuine democracies and is strongly opposed to racial discrimination, the denial of human rights and discrimination based on religion, caste or gender.

BILATERAL TIES / RESTORE PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACT WITH PAK.

Vajpayee Govt. to blame for poor relations with neighbours: Gujral

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 2. While arguing in favour of restoring people-to-people contacts between India and Pakistan, the former Prime Minister, I.K. Gujral, today expressed the hope that such informal relations would help in normalising Indo-Pak. ties.

Rapping the Vajpayee Government for what he called was a "sharp deterioration" in India's relations with its neighbours like Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, Mr. Gujral wondered what kind of future was being shaped up by the BJP-led coalition regime for the country.

Addressing the concluding session of the "People's Integration Council" here, he said: "Our neighbours are like our own brothers. We enjoy age-old relations with them on the basis of language, religion, emotion and history. If we cannot have good relations with our neighbours, what kind of ties will we have with other nations?"

On India's friendship and close ties with the U.S., he said that friendly Indo-U.S. ties were a "different priority" which should not prevent people-to-people contacts with Pakistan from being restored.

While admitting that the military dictatorship in Islamabad had a "vested interest" in keeping the ties with New Delhi always on the boil as 60 per cent of that country's budget was meant only for defence purposes, Mr. Gujral said that the common people in both the countries yearned for peace and normal relations.

He said the Government should make all out efforts to strengthen relations with Dhaka as it was India that had played a pivotal role in liberating Bangladesh even at the cost of the lives of its men in uniform.

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"What happened to Nepal? It is a Hindu nation and even our relations with it are not as good as they should have been. In Sri Lanka, you have a nation from a far-flung part of the world working for peace in the island nation. What kind of India are we building for the future," he asked.

Emphasising the need to bind the nation together through secular and democratic values, Mr. Gujral said India's diverse cultural and religious heritage had played a key role in keeping the people together.

In his opinion, secularism re-

mained a "positive factor" — a tool of taking the nation to a scientific age — and was imbued with a modern outlook to modernise the nation. "Building a modern, scientific nation is a commitment given in the Constitution. Only backward societies have divisive tendencies," he told the delegates.

While asserting that elections were a salient feature of a vibrant democracy, Mr. Gujral said that democracy itself could not be either "saffron, green or blue."

Pledging the support of the Rashtriya Janata Dal to the initiative taken by the 'People's Integration Council' in maintaining national unity, the party MP, Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, cautioned against dangers posed by regional disparities and communal forces.

The Congress spokesman, Jaipal Reddy, stressed on three crucial factors — economic growth, social justice and effective governance — for taking the country ahead on the path of development and harmony.

Other speakers included the Lok Janshakti leader, Ram Vilas Paswan, the Samajwadi Party leader, Amar Singh, and the CPI (M) leader from Jammu and Kashmir, Yusuf Tarigami.

It is a gimmick: Venkaiah

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 2. Criticising the setting up of a Peoples' Integration Council, the Bharatiya Janata Party president, Venkaiah Naidu, today said raising the "bogey of communalism" and talking about "secularism under great stress" was "highly objectionable".

Describing the council as a "gimmick" he said the real purpose was to bring together the non-BJP Opposition, a mission that was bound to "flop". The Congress and other parties had not learnt the right lessons from Gujarat and they had failed to gauge the mood of the nation, he said.

While the Congress was opposed to the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), it had "quietly invoked it in Maharashtra", he said. He questioned the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister's demand for a ban on cow slaughter and alleged that the Congress was "silent" on the large-scale illegal immigration of Bangladeshis into India.

THE HINDU

FEB 2003

India opposed to war: Fernandes

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By Our Staff Correspondent

MYSORE, FEB. 1. The Defence Minister, George Fernandes, today reiterated India's opposition to any conflict with Iraq and said an outbreak of war would have severe repercussions in the region.

Speaking at a religious and cultural function at Suttur near here, Mr. Fernandes said the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, had expressed India's opposition to war. "The United States had no right to interfere with the affairs of other countries and take decision on regime change."

The U.S. efforts to replace the ruler of Iraq would be fraught with severe consequences, as it would amount to interfering with the internal affairs of other nations. War would send wrong signals to the democratic countries, as they believed it was the

prerogative of the people of the respective nations to support the kind of regime they wished to have, Mr. Fernandes said.

Committee plans demonstration

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 1. The Committee Against War on Iraq is planning to hold a demonstration here on February 10 before the American Centre at Kasturba Gandhi Marg here, a CPI (M) release said.

The committee comprising various political parties, organisations and prominent individuals was constituted October last. It had organised a demonstration here on November 14.

The demonstration 10 is part of a series of actions planned by the committee.

'Nepal dialogue should be based on consensus'

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 30. India today said it had noted the ceasefire announcements made on Wednesday by the Nepalese Government and the Maoists which could lead to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Himalayan Kingdom.

The Foreign Office spokesman told presspersons that the process of dialogue should be based on national consensus, involve political parties and take place in an environment free from violence. India, he said, remained committed to the strengthening of its long-standing, close friendship and good neighbourly relations with Nepal. He said multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy were the two pillars of stability in Nepal.

The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha,

had had a productive visit to Tajikistan and would now commence the Kyrgyzstan leg of his tour to Central Asia. Mr. Sinha, who held meetings with the Tajik Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and other dignitaries, signed an agreement to set up a food processing plant, equipment for which would be supplied free by India.

He said India and Tajikistan had also agreed to set up a Joint Working Group (JWG) on counter-terrorism. New Delhi had offered a Government-to-Government credit line of \$75 million and a separate \$25 million credit line for supplies. Tajik Air is expected to shortly commence commercial flights to New Delhi, which could lead to Tajikistan having a consular presence in the Indian capital. As of now, Tajikistan does not have an embassy in New Delhi.

31 JAN 2003

Khatami visit: India makes tangible gains

HT Correspondents
Hyderabad/Delhi, Jan 28

IRANIAN PRESIDENT Syed Mohammad Khatami left for Teheran after an 18-hour visit to this southern city, which has the largest number of people of Iranian origin, on Tuesday.

Though the President's special plane arrived nearly two hours late last night, hundreds of enthusiastic Iranians were at the airport to greet him. Breaking away from protocol, Khatami shook hands with many of them. Khatami and the presidential entourage spent a greater part of the day visiting the Hi-tech City, the eSeva centre and saw how various Government services were being rendered to the people at single-point, thanks to the networking of several Government departments.

He also visited the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, a premier research centre in bio-sciences. He was impressed by the progress made by Andhra Pra-

desh in the field of information technology and e-governance. The visit, an official said, was primarily to convey a message to the Iranians in the city that the Government of Iran has not forgotten them. The visiting dignitary spent some time meeting with the staff and family members of the Iranian consulate here before leaving for his country in the evening.

'Visit a gain for India'

For New Delhi, Khatami's visit shows tangible gains, including a firm commitment from Iran of its sincerity in helping India develop a stake in the economic future of Central Asia.

From Iran's point of view, it has meant a big leap forward in securing credibility with the world's largest democracy. The diplomatic gains from this would be put to test in the period after the United States settles its score with Iraq. Iran is one of those countries worrying the US. Being on India's good

books may help offset threats to the Teheran regime.

India will move swiftly to capitalise on the advantages from this visit. The old Transit Agreement with Iran offered a route to Turkmenistan but few wanted to avail it because of doubtful economic viability. Now, with Iran offering links through Chabahar port to Milet, there is a chance for India to link up with the famous "Garland Road" (Kabul-Kandahar-Herat road) of Afghanistan offering easy access to Central Asia. Besides, Iran has offered to waive 90 per cent of landing charges on Indian exports to Indian humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan's reconstruction. The long-term strategic interests of India are served by these parcels of goodwill with Pakistan obstinately blocks.

Pakistan has made much hype over Khatami's December 22-24 visit to Islamabad, but it produced neither a joint statement nor much substantial benefit for it.

India warming up to Myanmar, Dhaka out in the cold

Nilove Roy Chaudhury in New Delhi

Jan. 21. — India is actively warming up to Myanmar, engaging with it economically and politically, to reduce its dependence on Bangladesh. The idea is to ensure that Bangladesh's perceived intransigence on a series of bilateral affairs does not prevent India from accessing the huge markets of southeast Asia. Though India has been a late entrant in the region, compared to China, the visit by the Myanmar foreign minister, Mr U Win Aung, has served to give a big push to bilateral ties, primarily economic, but also strategic.

The two countries had signed a protocol on foreign office consultations that will ensure that they keep in regular touch, and Myanmar's assurance in tracking down and preventing anti-India insurgents groups (mostly Kukis, Bodos and ULFA, from the northeast) from operating there makes it a small oasis in the gradually enveloping net that terrorism appears to have spread around this country. Mr Aung assured the external affairs minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha, that his country would not allow its territory to be used by insurgents to launch terrorist attacks against India. Additionally, the incentive of 90 trillion cubic feet of "proven" natural gas reserves that Myanmar claims it has, makes it especially attractive for energy-starved India, which is desperately looking for easily accessible, secure sources of energy.

THE STATESMAN

27 JAN 2013

India and France sign extradition agreement

By Bisheshwar Mishra
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Paris: India and France



L.K. Advani

on Friday signed the much-awaited extradition treaty which does not bind India not to punish a person extradited from France with death.

The treaty was signed by Deputy Prime Minister Advani and French justice minister Dominique Perben at a simple function in the justice ministry here.

Fielding questions about the salient features of the treaty after the ceremony, the French minister said: "The treaty is like any other extradition treaty which France has signed with several other countries."

On his part, Advani, when asked if the "irritant" over capital punishment between the two countries had been addressed and settled, said: "There is no such provision in the extradition treaty as such nor is it required. There is a provision in Indian law under which the executive has the power to assure a country that no capital punishment would be carried out."

In this context, he referred to India's experience with Portugal where such an assurance was helping India proceed against Mumbai underworld don Abu Salem.

In reply to a question, the French justice minister said France would prefer to try a French national in its territory if he/she happens to commit a crime

in a country like India.

Perben said the country seeking extradition has to furnish details which will be looked into by the country which has signed the extradition treaty. If the judicial authority of the latter country is convinced about the nature of the crime, the person can be extradited.

When Advani was asked if the extradition treaty would help in the deportation of a person if he/she was wanted for a crime committed in India, Advani explained that a deportation treaty and an extradition treaty were two different things. "While an extradition treaty involves a lengthy legal process which has to be gone through by both countries, deportation involves an executive decision," Advani said.

Later, at a formal press briefing, Advani said: "The extradition treaty that we have signed will be a logical adjunct to the existing architecture of reciprocal cooperation. We are also on the verge of finalising mutual assistance agreements on criminal and civil matters. Together, these treaties and accords will put in place a powerful panoply of legal instruments to facilitate our common resolve to ensure security and safety of our peoples."

Meanwhile Mr Perben said the extradition treaty signed with India was similar to the one France had signed with some other countries under which both countries recognise that extradition is possible in compliance with the criminal rules applicable to each other country.

As and when a case comes, each case would be taken up and considered, he said.

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India against removal of Saddam: Yashwant Sinha

By K. Balchand

PATNA, JAN. 19. The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, said here today that India's ties with the United States were on the upswing and that Delhi was in constant touch with Washington for better understanding on a host of issues.

While not commenting on the U.S. build-up in the Gulf region, Mr. Sinha stressed on the compliance of the U.N. resolution by Iraq and a peaceful resolution of the issue. He took the stand that military action was not a solution and said India did not favour external intervention in the internal affairs of any country.

Talking to mediapersons, he said India did not favour the removal of the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein. "It is not the responsibility of any country, however high or mighty, to interfere in another country's affairs." However, one could not oppose the military build-up in the region as most of the U.S.



fleet was either in international waters or had been allowed permission by the respective countries.

Ruling out talks with Islamabad till it put an end to trans-border terrorism, Mr. Sinha regretted that international pressure had not been effective in this respect thus far. Denying that Delhi's foreign policy was Pakistan-centric, he said the international community appreciated bilateral relations with India.

On SAARC, Mr. Sinha said Pakistan's attitude was the biggest bottleneck in ushering in a free trade regime for better relations

among the member countries. Pakistan was not in favour of such an arrangement and it had also not reciprocated India's gesture of bestowing the most favoured nation status on it.

In obvious appreciation of the mega-defence deal in the offing, he sought to place India's relations with Russia on a higher pedestal as compared to those with the U.S., stressing that the traditional ties with Moscow were being further reinforced. He maintained that friendship between India and Russia was progressing well and that the old bonds were being strengthened. He said that the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, might visit Moscow this year.

He underlined that relations with China were now better as both countries were putting their best foot forward in resolving the border dispute.

The process of exchanging maps was progressing well and Mr. Vajpayee was scheduled to visit Beijing later this year.

20 JAN 2003

8-6 P.M. 11-11-1971

Neighbourhood policy: the Yashwant Doctrine?

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, JAN. 12. In outlining a new set of ideas on reviving the moribund economic regionalism in the sub-continent last week, the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, has broken some fresh ground in India's policy towards the neighbourhood.

Addressing a group of enthusiasts from the region here last week, Mr. Sinha charted a way out of the current stalemate in India's relations with its South Asian neighbours. At the heart of it is a focus on regional trade; that will be advanced by India through unilateral measures, if necessary.

Mr. Sinha said the time has come to stop debating economic cooperation in South Asia and start acting on it. Arguing that the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had produced shamefully little on regional integration over the last two decades, Mr. Sinha put forward a package of proposals.

He suggested that the seven countries of the region discard further negotiations on the cautious South Asian preferential trading arrangement and move straight towards a bolder free trade agreement, which he said India would be ready to sign immediately.

Mr. Sinha also identified a more effective mechanism for trade negotiations. He called for junking the current approach in the SAARC, which exchanged "positive lists" of tradable items among member-states.

He called for negotiations on the basis of "negative lists" of items, which the seven nations might not want to trade on a preferential basis. Instead of avoiding discussion of items of specific concern, small negative

lists would help address directly the specific fears in the region that they might be swamped by Indian goods under a free trade regime.

Mr. Sinha also proposed harmonisation of tariffs over a period of time across the region that will prevent unscrupulous traders from taking advantage of differences in taxation. That precisely is the source of current difficulties in the trade between India and Nepal. Mr. Sinha argued that a free

NEWS ANALYSIS

trade regime in South Asia would not be complete without an agreement on free flow of capital and services across the region.

Even more boldly, Mr. Sinha has urged the region to begin talking about a South Asian Union. Yes, a political union! Mr. Sinha said India "will be interested in negotiating a new agreement which will create a South Asian Union... the SAU will not merely be an economic entity. It will acquire a political dimension in the same manner which the European Union has come to acquire a political and strategic dimension".

This is probably the first time in recent memory any leading functionary of the Indian Government has suggested a political union in South Asia. Mr. Sinha's bold framework comes amidst a darkening mood about the region in New Delhi.

The postponement of the SAARC summit in Pakistan, the political stalemate with Islamabad and increasing tensions with Bangladesh together seemed to suggest India's neighbourhood policy was being set back.

Mr. Sinha's comments suggest all is not

lost, and that India is determined to lead the region towards a different future. The ideas put forward by the External Affairs Minister are very similar to the Gujral Doctrine of the mid 1990s.

Mr. Sinha not only acknowledged the debt to the former Prime Minister, I.K. Gujral, but also traced its roots to the "good neighbourhood policy" adopted by Atal Behari Vajpayee when he was External Affairs Minister during 1977-79.

India was not merely returning to the Gujral Doctrine. Mr. Sinha wants to inject significant economic content into it. In signalling a new direction to India's neighbourhood policy, Mr. Sinha is also emphasising two important political messages.

One, India's size and centrality to the region are realities that will not disappear by some of its neighbours bemoaning them. Two, in a clear message to Pakistan and Bangladesh, Mr. Sinha said, respect for the security concerns of each other is the key to the success of trade and prosperity in the region.

Despite Mr. Sinha's good intentions, it is unlikely that Pakistan will respond positively to his proposals on regional economic cooperation. To signal the seriousness of India's intent, Mr. Sinha must quickly implement his proposals with other nations.

An early expanded free trade agreement with Sri Lanka, upgradation of trade ties with Nepal, and the creation of significant market access for Bangladesh are all within the grasp of the Indian Government. India must demonstrate that it is ready to step up the pace of regional economic integration — with Pakistan if possible and without it, if necessary.

INDIA

FRIDAY, JANUARY 10, 2003

RECAST THE POLICY

WHILE SEVERAL INTERLOCUTORS have repeatedly urged New Delhi to look beyond the one-point focus of its Pakistan policy, there has as yet been no sign that the country's foreign policy establishment has recognised that its argument, that infiltration from across the western border must be ended before a dialogue is initiated, is not appreciated by the larger part of the global community. Any hope that New Delhi might have entertained — that it would eventually succeed in isolating Pakistan from the rest of the global community and thereby pressure Islamabad to crack down more effectively on cross-border terror — has been struck a fresh blow by the latest message from the U.S. State Department delivered through its Director, Policy Planning Staff, Richard N. Haass. The message was that India and Pakistan should realise that their interests would be better served if they would remove the pre-conditions for a dialogue. While the statement was directed at both New Delhi and Islamabad, it is not possible to miss the underlying message that India should no longer expect Washington to throw its weight behind the proposition that an end to cross-border infiltration is a non-negotiable pre-condition. The U.S. would indeed appear to have further opened up the space between its approach and that of India since it is no longer coupling its advocacy of a dialogue with an assessment of its own that infiltration has decreased. When it states that it will continue to urge Islamabad to end the infiltration, Washington clearly recognises that such infiltration has not abated and yet it has become the more insistent on the need for a dialogue. Others do not appear to view India's insistence on a single spectrum demand, even as it ignores opportunities that may be available, as a sign of strength but rather as a sign of immaturity.

New Delhi should have understood by now, without the need for the advice proffered by the U.S., that a policy cannot consist of a demand or a set of demands alone. It ought to have been able to conceptualise a policy that

takes note of the potentialities that do exist in the current situation. At the least, New Delhi should have explored these potentialities to ascertain whether India's long-term objectives can be promoted through a dialogue with Pakistan. Most significant of the new potentialities created is the installation of a civilian Cabinet in Pakistan. It may well be that the civilian Cabinet will not display much flexibility in its approach since it is too beholden to the Pakistan military which is inherently hostile to India. But is it in India's interest to act as if this proposition will hold for a long time to come and is it even possible to know the validity of this proposition without testing it? After all, successive civilian Governments in Pakistan have fallen out with the military and, for the most part, have displayed a less antagonistic attitude towards India the more estranged they have been from their armed forces. It is important to note in this context that the first message to India from the elected Pakistan Cabinet was about the need for friendly relations.

In urging India to take note of other aspects of the current situation, Washington has pointedly described as positive the assistance that Islamabad has provided to it in the war against global terror. This is as clear a refutation as there ever can be of New Delhi's argument that Pakistan has become, not just a sponsor of, but in fact the epicentre of international terrorism. Washington in pursuit of its own agenda has declined to categorise Pakistan in the manner desired by India even while it acknowledged that Islamabad had failed to put an end to cross-border infiltration — this failure was killing Pakistan's hopes of a settlement on Kashmir, Mr. Haass noted. The time would appear to have arrived for New Delhi to acknowledge that given the various interests and concerns that come into play, its efforts to isolate Pakistan from the global community are not likely to succeed and that it should, therefore, take a serious look at other policy options.

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