

LOOKING AHEAD: The ball of the Indo-Pak peace process is in New Delhi's court

Mutual mistrust fund

BY PREM SHANKAR JHA

POLITICAL LEADERS seldom concede failure. One has to look no further than the mess in Iraq to see this. In a less spectacular way, this is also true of the leaders of Pakistan and India. For behind polite assurances of goodwill and scheduling of further meetings, the India-Pakistan peace initiative is now dead in the water.

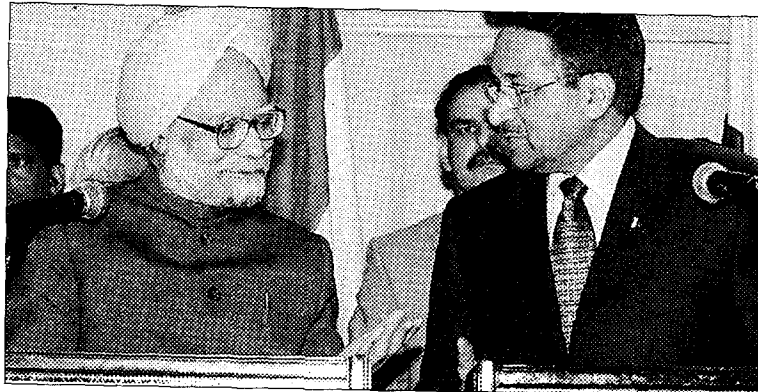
The high point of the initiative was reached when Manmohan Singh met Pervez Musharraf in New York in September. Singh assured Musharraf that India would consider virtually any solution that didn't involve a redrawing of boundaries in Kashmir. He apparently explained that a change of boundaries would amount to a second partition on religious lines and could upset the social balance in the country. Musharraf apparently promised to get back to him with concrete suggestions. Both emerged looking relaxed and relieved.

Since then things have gone steadily downhill. Prior to Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri's visit in early October, India submitted a 72-point agenda for confidence-building. Later, this was pared down to 30 points. Pakistan agreed to examine the proposals, but has not responded to them, till this day.

Kasuri's visit also didn't do much to unfreeze the deadlock over Kashmir. Pakistan Foreign Secretary Riaz Khokar, whose visit preceded Kasuri's by a few days, met Hurriyat leaders and others from Kashmir in Delhi. He briefed Kasuri that many of them were adamantly opposed to the bus link between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad since any such 'concession' would reduce alienation in Kashmir and would, therefore, strengthen the case for a settlement based on the *status quo*. Khokar was repeating what only one leader, Ali Shah Geelani, said and seems to have underplayed the strong endorsement of the move by other Hurriyat leaders. But Geelani's reasoning resonated strongly among the hawks in Islamabad.

The foreign ministers' meeting did, however, lead to a further easing of visa restrictions, an agreement to increase the number of crossing points and, perhaps most promising of all, an agreement by India in principle to share a gas pipeline from Iran with Pakistan. But that was where meaningful progress stopped, and distrust and misunderstanding took over.

The first occasion was when Musharraf floated a trial balloon at an Iftar party on October 25, that In-



LET ME SAY THAT AGAIN IN URDU: Manmohan Singh and Musharraf, New York

dia and Pakistan could agree to identify some disputed parts of the two Kashmirs, and put them under joint control or under the UN. This created ripples of unease in India that compelled Singh to remind Musharraf of what he had said in New York. But the Indian reaction was a pale shadow of the storm that broke on Musharraf's head in Pakistan. Not only was his proposal rejected by the Jamaat-e-Islami and various *jehadi* factions in Muzaffarabad, but also by the Muslim League and other democratic parties. Not surprisingly, speaking to Indian journalists in Lahore, he hardened his stand.

During his visit to India on November 23-24, Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz smoothed ruffled feathers in New Delhi by making it clear that he had not come with any concrete proposals on Kashmir, and that Musharraf had been speaking informally to a Pakistani audience in order to get a feedback. Apart from Saarc issues, he confined the larger part of his discussions to promoting closer economic relations between the two countries.

In particular, he made it clear that Pakistan would welcome Indian participation in the gas pipeline project, although it was prepared to go it alone if India decided to stay out. This visit, too, produced little more than an agreement to keep talking. India wanted Pakistan to offer Most Favoured Nation treatment to Indian exports, in exchange for participating in the pipeline project. It later reduced its demand to being allowed transit access for Indian goods to Afghanistan through Wagah and Lahore. But Aziz dug his heels in and insisted that the pipeline project had to be a stand-alone project, while the other issues were a part of the composite dialogue.

India and Pakistan have also failed to come to an agreement on

the opening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road. India agreed that there would be no need for visas and that an entry permit on a separate paper would suffice, but insisted that this should be accompanied by a passport, as proof of identification. It also insisted that the road should be open to use by non-Kashmiris from both countries who had the necessary visas. Pakistan, however, was adamant that passports should not be used and that a certificate from the district magistrate should suffice as it used to before 1953. It also wants the use of the road to be limited to Kashmiris.

The final roadblock was hit by the working group on CBMs in non-nuclear security issues on December 15. Pakistan turned down nine proposals made by India in June, and raised instead a demand that the two countries should move towards parity in military strength, a move that would require disbanding nearly half of the Indian army. With this, for the moment at least, the last vestiges of forward momentum have petered out.

When a process in which the people of two countries have invested a great deal of hope totters, it is customary for each side to blame the other. The present impasse has proved no exception. Behind a veil of polite good cheer, the air is thick with accusations of bad faith. Pakistanis remain convinced, perhaps more than ever, that India is only paying lip service to the idea of a composite dialogue, and that everything its officials are actually doing is part of an attempt to isolate Kashmir from other issues, resolve the latter and thereby create conditions for an acceptance of the *status quo* in Kashmir, perhaps with cosmetic changes.

Indian officials are equally convinced that Pakistan is not prepared to allow other elements of the composite dialogue to progress until they

have wrested some concrete concessions on Kashmir. They are convinced that Pakistan has decided to stall the bus route proposal at any cost. Finally, they justify their insistence upon linking land transit rights to Afghanistan with the gas pipeline, because although Pakistan claims it has given free access to Afghanistan via Karachi and Quetta, Indian goods destined for Afghanistan inexplicably take up to eight months to clear Karachi port. Thus, virtually everything India is sending to Afghanistan is going through the Persian port of Bandar Abbas and Herat.

There is an element of truth in all these allegations. But it's dwarfed by each side's inability, or unwillingness, to understand and accept the limitations under which the other must operate. A crucial example was Delhi's failure to see Musharraf's Iftar proposal through his eyes. From the Pakistani point of view, his suggestion that a Muslim majority part of Kashmir could be separated from the rest, but did not necessarily have to become part of Pakistan, amounted to a repudiation of the ideological basis of that nation's claim to Kashmir; that's the belief that Pakistan will remain incomplete if the Muslim majority part of Kashmir doesn't become a part of it. It's no wonder that Musharraf was roundly abused by the Jamaat-e-Islami and other religious organisations in Pakistan.

By the same token, Pakistani negotiators find it difficult to understand that it is Delhi's concern for the well-being of India's Muslim population that makes it reject any solution that looks like another religion-based partition. Had Musharraf been more sensitive to this, he wouldn't have sent up his trial balloon at the Iftar function, without at least warning Delhi of his intentions.

This incomprehension apart, the slow grinding down of negotiations shows how deeply ingrained is the mistrust that separates the two countries. At the level of civil servants, this should not be surprising for it is their job to examine every possible consequence of an action and guard against it. But this mentality effectively precludes making that leap of imagination or trust without which deadlocks cannot be broken. That can only come from the heads of State. The time has, therefore, come for this 'dialogue' to move back to the highest level or government. However ineptly he may have done it, Musharraf made his break with the past at the Iftar dinner on October 25. The ball is, therefore, in Manmohan Singh's court.

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কাশ্মীর নিয়ে তাড়াছড়ো নয়, ভারতের যুক্তি মানল পাকিস্তান

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৮ ডিসেম্বর ছ'মাস আগে যখন মনমোহন সিংহ প্রধানমন্ত্রী হয়েছিলেন, তখন বুঝতে চায়নি পাকিস্তান। আজ তারা ভারতের যুক্তি মানতে বাধ্য হয়েছে। পঞ্চাশ বছরেরও বেশি পুরনো কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধান তাড়াছড়ো করে হয় না। তাই দু'দিন পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে ধরে বিদেশ সচিব পর্যায়ে যে আলোচনা হল, তাতে আরও আস্থাঘর্ষক পদক্ষেপ নিয়ে আলোচনা হলেও কাশ্মীর-সূত্র নিয়ে কোনও কথা হয়নি। স্থির হয়েছে, কাশ্মীর-সূত্র নিয়ে আলোচনা করবেন দু'দেশের জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা জে এন দীক্ষিত এবং তারিক আজিজ। জানুয়ারি মাসের প্রথম সপ্তাহেই পাকিস্তানের ফ্রাইডে টাইমস-এর সম্পাদক নাজিম শেঠি আসছেন। তিনি বেসরকারি ভাবে পাকিস্তানের তরফে ট্র্যাক-টু কুটনীতির প্রধান পুরোধা। এই সফরেই আজিজ-দীক্ষিত বৈঠকের দিনক্ষণ ঠিক হবে। এর আগে এই বৈঠক হওয়ার কথা ছিল অমৃতসরে। কিন্তু নানা কারণে তা পিছিয়ে যায়।

ঢাকায় আসন্ন সার্ক সম্মেলনে প্রথা অনুসারে পাকিস্তানের প্রধানমন্ত্রী যাবেন। প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ যাবেন না। কাজেই এখনই মুশারফের সঙ্গে মনমোহনের আলোচনার সম্ভাবনা কম। যদিও পাকিস্তান চাইছে যত তাড়াতাড়ি সম্ভব বৈঠকটি হোক। কিন্তু এ ব্যাপারেও ভারত তাড়াছড়ো করতে রাজি নয়। সে-ক্ষেত্রে সেপ্টেম্বরে নিউ ইয়র্কে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের অধিবেশনের আগে মনমোহন-মুশারফ বৈঠকের সম্ভাবনা কম। ভারত চাইছে, এই শীর্ষ রাজনৈতিক বৈঠকের আগে দীক্ষিত-আজিজ কাশ্মীর-

সূত্র নিয়ে কূটনৈতিক আলোচনাটা চালিয়ে যান।

ভারত এই কৌশল নিচ্ছে মানে এই নয় যে, তারা মৈত্রী ও শান্তির প্রক্রিয়াকে এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে নিরুৎসাহী। বরং শান্তিপ্রক্রিয়া সুষ্ঠু ভাবে এগিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়ার ক্ষেত্রে দু'দেশের বিদেশ সচিবের দু'দিনের এই বৈঠক যথেষ্ট সাহায্য করেছে বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে। আর এই কারণেই দু'দেশের পক্ষ থেকে বেশ কিছু ব্যবস্থা আজ গ্রহণ করা হয়েছে। এবং ইসলামাবাদ থেকে যৌথ বিবৃতি দিয়ে দু'পক্ষই এই ব্যবস্থাগুলি ঘোষণা করেছে। এর আগে ২৪ সেপ্টেম্বর মনমোহন-মুশারফ বৈঠকের পরে একটি যৌথ বিবৃতি দেওয়া হয়েছিল। সেই বিবৃতির ধারাবাহিকতা রক্ষা করে আজ ভারতের বিদেশসচিব জানিয়েছেন, "আমরা মত পার্থক্যের জায়গাগুলি দূর করার চেষ্টা করছি। জম্মু-কাশ্মীরের বিষয়টিকে কোণে ঠেলে দিতে চাই না। মূলতুবিও রাখছি না। কিন্তু এমন একটা জটিল বিষয় সমাধানে সময় লাগবে।" এ কথা বলে ভারত ফের বুঝিয়ে দিল বন্ধুত্বের পথ থেকে না সরলেও তাড়াছড়ো করতে সে রাজি নয়।

২০০৫ সালের জুলাই-অগস্টে দু'দেশের বিদেশসচিব ফের বৈঠকে বসবেন। আর জানুয়ারি থেকে জুন মাসের মধ্যে বিভিন্ন বিষয় নিয়ে বৈঠক হবে। যেমন বাণিজ্যসচিব পর্যায়ে আলোচনা, ভারত-পাকিস্তান উপকূলরক্ষীদের আলোচনা, বি এস এফ এবং পাক রেঞ্জারদের বৈঠক, পরমাণু বিষয়ক আস্থাবর্ধক কর্মসূচি, অমৃতসর-লাহোর বাস পরিষেবা, মাদক নিয়ন্ত্রণ বিষয়ক আলোচনা ইত্যাদি।

ঢাকায় সার্ক সম্মেলনের সময় দু'দেশের

বিদেশমন্ত্রীরা এক দফা আলোচনা করবেন। তার পর ফেব্রুয়ারিতে বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ ইসলামাবাদ যাবেন দ্বিপাক্ষিক আলোচনার জন্য। বিদেশসচিব শ্যাম সারন পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী শওকত আজিজ এবং বিদেশমন্ত্রী খুরশিদ তসৌরির সঙ্গে বৈঠক করেছেন। বৈঠকের পর সারন জানিয়েছেন, "শ্রীনগর-মুজফফরাবাদ বাস সংযোগের বিষয়টি নিয়েও আলোচনা চলছে। পাকিস্তান চাইছে, পাসপোর্ট ছাড়াই এই বাসে যাতায়াত করতে দেওয়া হোক। ভারত তাতে রাজি নয়। কিন্তু এ ব্যাপারে ভারতের বিদেশসচিব আজ কিছুটা নরম মনোভাব দেখিয়েছেন। আরও ঠিক হয়েছে, সুসংহত আলোচনার অন্য ছ'টি বিষয় নিয়েও দু'দেশের মধ্যে আলোচনা হবে এপ্রিল এবং জুনের মধ্যে। এই বিষয়গুলির মধ্যে আছে সিয়াচেন, তুলবুল জলাধার প্রকল্প, স্যার ক্রিক, সন্ত্রাস, মাদক চোরাচালান, আর্থিক ও বাণিজ্যিক সহযোগিতা। কাশ্মীর সীমান্ত বর্যাবর ৫টি নির্দিষ্ট জায়গায় দুই কাশ্মীরের বিচ্ছিন্ন পরিবারগুলির মিলনস্থান গড়ার প্রস্তাব দিয়েছে ভারত। পাকিস্তান তাতে সোৎসাহে রাজি।

ইসলামাবাদে ভারতের বিদেশ সচিব অবশ্য এটাও জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন যে, সীমান্ত-পার সন্ত্রাস বন্ধ করতেও ভারত বন্ধপরিকর। বাজপেয়ী এবং মুশারফের বৈঠকের পর যে যৌথ বিবৃতি জারি করা হয়েছিল তাতেও বলা হয়েছিল পাকিস্তানের জমিকে ভারত বিরোধী সন্ত্রাসের কাজে ব্যবহার করা হবে না। সেই বিষয়টিকেও আজকের আলোচনায় গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হয়।

29 DEC 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

India, Pakistan to have regular military contacts

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 28. As part of conventional confidence building measures (CBMs), India and Pakistan have agreed to promote "regular contact" between their militaries at the local level at designated places.

They would also explore further CBMs along the International Boundary and Line of Control (LoC) and a host of measures to ameliorate sufferings of civilian prisoners.

A joint statement at the end of the two-day Foreign Secretary-level talks contains a clear message of commitment on both sides to carry forward the dialogue process in a bid to resolve all differences.

It noted the solemn and categorical assurance contained in the joint press statement of January 6, in the wake of meeting between the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, and the then Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, on the sidelines of SAARC and the spirit of understanding between Gen. Musharraf and the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, in New York on September 24 on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly.

The Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, who addressed a press conference after the second round of dialogue, said that the implementation of the "fundamental assurance" by Gen. Musharraf to Mr. Vajpayee that the soil of Pakistan

would not be used against India for terrorism was critical to take forward the process.

At a separate press briefing Pakistan Foreign Secretary, Riaz Khokar recalled the understanding of September when India and Pakistan had agreed to explore all possible options on Kashmir and asserted that full normalisation of

ties with India would only be possible only after the resolution of Kashmir.

The joint statement said that both sides moved forward in their quest for peace with narrowing differences on draft agreement on pre-notification of missile tests and an understanding to promote regular contacts along the LoC and the International Border.

It described the talks as being held in "a frank, cordial and constructive atmosphere."

The Foreign Secretaries deliberated on the issues of peace and security, including CBMs, and Jammu and Kashmir.

They also agreed to continue with the composite dialogue process and meet in New Delhi to review the overall progress in July or August 2005.

Kasuri offers guarantees on gas line to India

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 28. Pakistan has once again invited India to be part of the proposed gas pipeline, from Iran, traversing through its landscape.

The Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, reiterated the offer with promises of guarantees on the safety aspects after a meeting with the visiting Iranian Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharrazi, this afternoon.

The proposed pipeline, Iran's nuclear stand-off with the United States and the European Union and bilateral matters were high on the agenda of Dr. Kharrazi in the course of his two-day stay.

The stated position of Pakis-

tan on the pipeline is that it would go ahead with the project whether or not India wanted to be on board.

It is immediately not clear as to why it is not going ahead with the project as India has made it known that it could consider the pipeline only as part of larger economic relations with Pakistan. Implied in the suggestion is the demand that Pakistan reciprocates the gesture of the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status and normalise trade relations.

Different view

Mr. Kasuri took a different view vis-à-vis the project.

Appealing to India to seriously consider joining the pipeline the Minister told *The Hindu*

"we have collected a lot of baggage. Pakistan's offer to India on the pipeline is different from its earlier stand of no trade with India without resolution of Kashmir. There is a definite thought behind it. We believe it is the interest of India, Pakistan and Iran that the project becomes a reality."

Option

According to Indian officials, New Delhi could explore other options.

One idea being considered is India paying directly to Iran for the gas supplied through the project and leaving the nitty-gritty of execution of the project in Pakistan or any other route to Tehran.

India, Pak to decide on expert-level talks today

Muhammad Najeeb
ISLAMABAD 27 DECEMBER

PAKISTAN and India are likely to announce the schedule for expert-level talks to follow up on six subjects on their talks' agenda for Tuesday, the second day of the foreign secretary-level talks that started on Monday morning, officials said.

The first round of talks between the Indian and Pakistani delegations concluded on Monday noon after both sides discussed the schedule for six agenda items, a senior Indian official said.

The two items that the foreign secretaries specifically dealt with are Kashmir as well as peace and security. The broader issue of peace and security that included nuclear confidence building was discussed, while the Kashmir issue, at the heart of the dispute between the countries, would be discussed, the official stated.

"We discussed the schedule and are close to finalising the dates for expert level talks on the six agenda items," the official said.

Foreign secretary Shyam Saran is leading the Indian delegation that comprises Arun Singh,

joint secretary (Pakistan) in the external affairs ministry, and Shivshankar Menon, Indian high commissioner in Pakistan.

Pakistani foreign secretary Riaz Khokhar is heading the Pakistan side that comprises Aziz Ahmad Khan, the Pakistani high commissioner in New Delhi, Masood Khan, the foreign office spokesman, and Jalil Abbas Gillani, the joint secretary in the foreign ministry.



TALKATHON: Pakistani foreign minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri talks to Indian foreign secretary Shyam Saran in Islamabad on Monday. — AFP

The delegates went for the lunch after the meeting in the foreign office building, the venue for the fifth rounds of secretary-level talks between the two sides.

"The talks were held in a very cordial atmosphere," said the Indian official requesting anonymity. Replying to a question if there was any good news for people of

both the countries, the official said: "Yes, both the sides discussed the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad (trans-Kashmir) bus service." But the official declined to say when this service would start. Previous rounds of talks on the trans-border bus hit roadblocks over the kind of travel documents the passengers should carry with them. The Indian official proposed a system of visa on arrival for senior citizens above 65.

— IANS

India, Pakistan have an "open mind"

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 26. On the eve of the second round of composite dialogue between India and Pakistan, the Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, said India wanted to establish friendly relations with Pakistan and that the dialogue process should be taken forward.

Mr. Saran, who is on a visit to Peshawar, told the local media that Pakistan had vital importance in South Asia and that it could play an effective role in economic co-operation in the region. Both sides are approaching the second round with an "open

mind." There is a sense that sustained and serious engagement was the only way to resolve differences on all subjects.

The emphasis in the second round would be on consolidation of the initiatives taken so far rather than any new proposals. A leading Pakistani daily has quoted sources in the Government as saying that Islamabad would come forward with "more" proposals on Kashmir, nuclear and conventional confidence building measures. However, the Pakistan Foreign Office declined to comment on the report. In the course of his interaction with the local media in Peshawar, Mr. Sa-

ran said economic co-operation in South Asia would benefit many other countries of the region, including Pakistan and India. He said relations between New Delhi and Islamabad must be improved for this purpose.

Mr. Saran was given a briefing about the Pakistan-Afghanistan border on the Machni check post and was told about the historical importance of the area. Later, he arrived here and met the Pakistan Foreign Secretary, Riaz Khokar, over dinner. They exchanged informal views on the dialogue beginning tomorrow.

Mr. Saran had said on his arrival in Pakistan on Saturday

that the focus of the second round would be on building trust in nuclear and conventional fields and narcotics trafficking. As per the composite dialogue format, talks at the level of Foreign Secretaries would cover the issues of Jammu and Kashmir and peace and security, besides reviewing the progress of the dialogue process.

Mr. Saran and Mr. Khokar would finalise the calendar of meetings for Siachen, Wullar Barrage, Sir Creek, elimination of terrorism and illicit narcotics, economic and commercial cooperation and exchange of friendly visits.

27 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

India-Pakistan dialogue to focus on building mutual trust

By B. Murajidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 25. The Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, arrived in Pakistan today for the second round of the composite dialogue beginning on Monday. The first round ended in September in New Delhi with a meeting at the level of Foreign Ministers.

"This time, the main focus during my talks with my counterpart [Riaz Khokar] in Islamabad would be on building mutual trust in the nuclear and conventional fields and countering narcotics trafficking," Mr. Saran told reporters here. As per the format for talks at the level of Foreign Secretaries, the issues would cover Kashmir and peace and security, besides a review of the progress of the dialogue process. The calendar of meetings for the remaining six items — Siachen, Wullar Barrage, Sir Creek, elimination of terrorism

and illicit narcotics, economic and commercial cooperation and exchange of friendly visits — would also be finalised.

Mixed outcome

The outcome of the first round is seen as mixed. While, there is a general level of satisfaction on both sides on concluding one full round of talks on a host of issues and agreeing to continue the process, the difference in perception on the pace and direction of the dialogue continues. Pakistan is not happy about the "little progress" made on Kashmir, categorised as a "core issue" by Islamabad. Its emphasis on simultaneous movement between Kashmir and confidence-building measures has considerably slowed down the process, much to New Delhi's chagrin.

Though no proposals are expected to be exchanged, there will be no dearth of issues to be

covered. Of the 98-odd proposals exchanged in the course of the first round, there has been little progress on a majority due to either serious differences or insistence of Pakistan on primacy of Kashmir.

Bus link

Even on subjects where both sides are agreed in principle, differences on implementation have blocked their execution. The bus link between Srinagar-Muzaffarabad is a case in point. Pakistan wants the passengers to be allowed to travel without passport and visa and the service confined only to Kashmiris.

India has agreed to relent on the passport issue but not on visas and exclusivity of the service. This will come up for review at the meeting on Monday. It is unlikely that any agreement will be reached on the subject. In the field of nuclear

and conventional CBMs also, little progress can be expected. This was evident at the experts'-level meeting. Both sides have exchanged a draft agreement on prior notification of missile tests. An accord on the draft would take time, given the complex technical and legal issues involved.

On the conventional front, there is no meeting point between the two sides. India does not subscribe to the Pakistani viewpoint on the need for a "balance" in the conventional weapons of the two countries.

On his arrival — through the Wagah border — Mr. Saran and his delegation was received by Pakistani protocol officials, the Indian High Commissioner, Shivshankar Menon, and the Deputy High Commissioner T.C.A. Raghavan. Later Mr. Saran left by air to Peshawar, where he will stay today and tomorrow.

Pak slams Singh's remarks

ISLAMABAD, Dec. 23.
— Pakistan today welcomed Dr Manmohan Singh's statement that India would pursue dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues as a "good sign", but claimed that his ruling out of redrawing of boundaries "contradicted" his stand to explore various options to resolve the Kashmir issue.

"The Prime Minister spoke about continuity of the dialogue. These reaffirmations are a good sign," foreign office spokesman Mr Masood Khan said here. But he added: "He (Dr Singh) talked about exploration of possible options and then said there cannot be redrawing of maps and boundaries... this becomes an oxymoron. There is contradiction, because what sort of options will you be exploring. You need a political space. We should not draw red lines." — PTI

24 DEC 2008

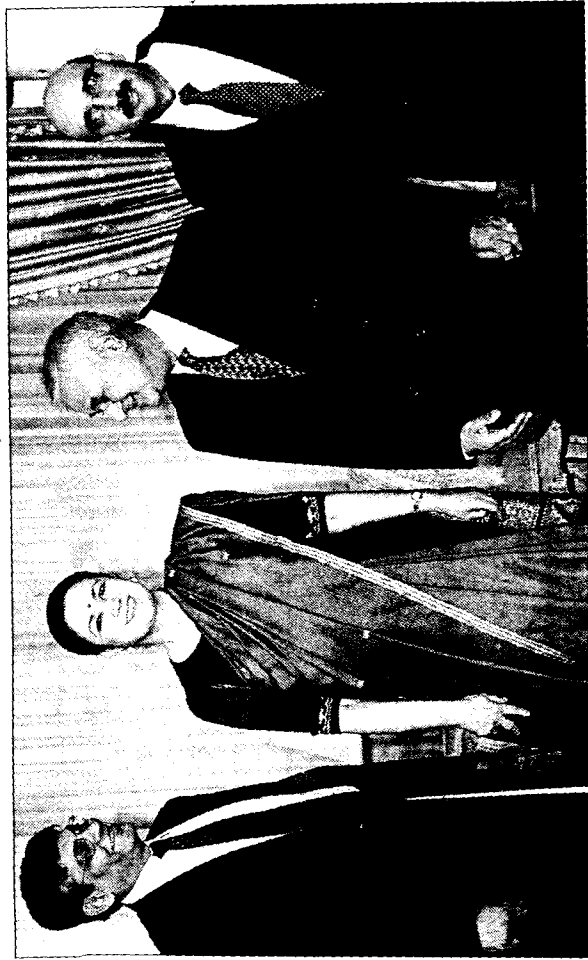
THE STATESMAN

Talking about nukes

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THE latest round of Indo-Pak talks on nuclear CBMs took place in Islamabad and ended in considerable mutual satisfaction. Both sides felt that progress had been made, both expected that the proposals raised in Islamabad would soon mature and take concrete shape. At their first meeting a few months ago, the two sides had agreed in principle that there should be a hotline between the two foreign secretaries and that advance notification should be given of any missile test, so as to avoid the risk of misunderstanding. They also agreed to improve the existing telephone link between their respective military headquarters. Modest steps, perhaps, but enough to be seen as something tangible in the direction of reducing nuclear risk. The recent meeting was unable to conclude the practical arrangements for these measures, which will have to await further discussion, but it seems to have been conducted in a friendly and positive spirit, to the extent that the Pakistani representative was moved to declare South Asia was no longer a nuclear flashpoint.

By contrast, the concurrent exchanges on conventional CBMs did not make much headway. However, lack of progress in this part of the dialogue was not permitted to dampen the entire exercise. The positive spirit on display in Islamabad can have a beneficial impact on the ongoing Indo-Pak dialogue as a whole, an operation that has been a cautious sparring match thus far with both sides refraining from any great show of enthusiasm for what they have been able to achieve. One can hope that the better feeling they have displayed about their work on nuclear CBMs gives momentum to other areas of the composite dialogue. Even if there is no such benefit to be had, it is encouraging that there has been some progress in the vital matter of reducing fears of inadvertent nuclear danger. However slow and uncertain may be the political dialogue, the two countries are doing well in identifying and pursuing their mutual interest in nuclear sta-



External affairs ministry joint secretary Arun Kumar Singh, foreign ministry additional secretary Mira Shankar, her Pakistani counterpart Tariq Usman Haider and Masooq Khan, a Pakistani foreign office spokesman, pose prior to a meeting in Islamabad. — AFP

bility, and this needs to be sustained even if the overall dialogue falters.

It is only to be expected that the international community will be taking close interest in all aspects of the Indo-Pak dialogue. Nuclear CBMs are of special interest, for South Asia has been regarded as particularly vulnerable to nuclear danger. Indeed, more than one think tank abroad has proposed measures very similar to those now under bilateral discussion. India and Pakistan may have arrived independently at the same conclusions, yet they must reckon with the close scrutiny of their endeavours not only by their own public but also by a variety of international bodies. On all sides, what observers will wish to see is the rapid enlargement of the series of CBMs: one or two steps of the sort now under discussion are not enough and do not constitute an adequate safety shield against inadvertence or accident. There is a considerable body of international experience on which India and Pakistan can draw should they so choose. Already, from the time of the Lahore Summit of several years ago, both have instituted certain restraint measures that are essentially declaratory and self-regulated. Now we are approaching a different sort of arrangement, one that requires bilateral agreement and may need to be monitored. Such agreements can be multiplied, with stronger mutual obligations built into them and more stringent monitoring arrangements. Eventually, some sense of having acquired a sufficiency, the minimum deterrence of which both have spoken, may come into view. But that as yet appears distant. For now, we must be satisfied with the first few steps, and with the

wide angle

SALMAN HAIDAR

readiness of both sides to expand their area of agreement in nuclear CBMs.

While by its own estimation South Asia should no longer engender nuclear anxiety, that is not true of other parts of Asia, particularly the Korean peninsula. North Korea is believed to be engaged in an unacknowledged nuclear weapons programme that is the cause of much international alarm, most notably in neighbouring South Korea. This is one of the most prominent current international concerns. India's external affairs minister visited South Korea the other day and reportedly advised that country and its northern rival not to emulate India by going nuclear themselves. Some comments in India — characteristically from sources that do not identify themselves — have tried to suggest that the minister had departed from established policy in what he said. In reality, of course, this is not so, for India has never supported a nuclear free-for-all, and has not regarded its own tests as a green signal for anyone else. Unlike Pakistan, India has also refrained from any activity that would encourage proliferation. Thus, the minister was only re-stating an essential Indian concern during his Korean visit, one that has acquired greater resonance as apprehensions increase about the Far East.

Another country that has been under prolonged scrutiny for allegedly planning to bypass international controls is Iran. There is no concrete evidence to support the allegations, which come mainly from the USA: IAEA inspections have thrown up nothing to controvert Iran's denial that it has any weapons programme. For India, this controversy is much closer home than the developments in the Far East. In Korea, it was sufficient for us to make known our stand; in Iran there is a stronger challenge and a call for a more active effort to dampen international discord and work for a diplomatic solution to the problem.

(Salman Haider is a former Foreign Secretary, Government of India.)

85-9-28/12

Pak sees K-policy change

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, Dec. 18. — Pakistan foreign minister Mr Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri today said that there has been a vivid change in India's Kashmir policy as New Delhi recognised Islamabad as party to resolution of Kashmir issue.

The fact that Kashmir has been included in the India-Pakistan peace dialogue showed that for the first time in 57 years, New Delhi recognised Islamabad as a party to its resolution, he told Geo TV in an interview. "Unless someone is politically blind, a change can be seen now... They were not ready for talks. Now negotiations are going on. Serious negotiations are going on."

Mr Kasuri said that the joint statement issued after the meeting between

President Musharraf and Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on 20 September on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly summit in New York clearly said that talks would include various options in resolving the Kashmir issue.

He went on to say that the Kashmiris were a major party to the resolution and peace could only be established once they were included in the dialogue process. Mr Kasuri also questioned New Delhi's stand that the construction of Baglihar dam was not in violation of the Indus Water Treaty. If it could not be resolved bilaterally, Pakistan would take the matter to the World Bank, he said.

Meanwhile, India has given a list of 54 prisoners of war, who went missing

during the 1971 War, to Pakistan and wants it to release them, a media report said today. Pakistan has been requested to release the prisoners so that they are reunited with their families, Pakistan daily *The News* quoted Indian officials.

India may raise the issue with Pakistan during the second round of the composite dialogue process to be held on 27 and 28 December. Pakistan has consistently denied the existence of 1971 Indian PoWs. The issue figured prominently during President Musharraf's 2001 visit during which he promised to launch a search for the Indian PoWs in Pakistani prisons.

Subsequently, Pakistan told India that a search of its prisons to locate the PoWs drew a blank.

19 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

Joint survey of Sir Creek

INDIA, PAKISTAN DISCUSS NUCLEAR CBMS

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Dec. 14. — India and Pakistan today held talks on nuclear confidence-building measures aimed at reducing the risk of accidental war and promoting strategic stability and agreed to conduct a joint survey of the boundary pillars at Sir Creek, a small coastal strip along the Rann of Kutch off Gujarat coast, from 3 January.

Additional secretary in the external affairs ministry, Ms Meera Shankar, is heading a five-member Indian delegation at the two-day talks here. The Pakistani side is led by her counterpart Mr Tariq Osman Hyder. The two sides are trying to hammer out an agreement on giving advance notice to each other before conducting missile tests.

The Sir Creek meeting discussed various modalities for conducting a joint survey of the boundary pillars laid in the past in the land portion of the area. Officials said both sides agreed to a joint survey of the pillars erected in 1924 by the then authorities of Sindh and Kutch from 3



Pakistan foreign minister Mr Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri shakes hands with Indian foreign ministry additional secretary Ms Meera Shankar prior to a meeting in Islamabad on Tuesday. — AFP

January. An announcement in this regard was expected to be made at the end of the talks tomorrow. Sir Creek is a small strip of water along the Rann of Kutch (in India) and Sindh (in Pakistan). Officials said

both countries were keen to acquire it as it is particularly considered to be rich in oil and natural gas. Both sides need to show some urgency in reaching a settlement as they have to resolve the issue by 2009, failing which the UN would declare it as international waters. The Indian delegation at the talks was headed by Brig. Girish Kumar, Deputy Surveyor General of India, and the Pakistani side was led by Major General Jamil-ur-Rehman Afridi, Surveyor General of Pakistan.

MoU on no to drug-trafficking

India and Pakistan today exchanged a draft MoU for bilateral cooperation in fighting drug-trafficking. The two countries this morning concluded two-day talks between the Narcotics Control Bureau of India and Anti Narcotics Force of Pakistan. Both sides discussed topics such as trafficking of drugs, psychotropics and precursor chemicals and means of enhancing bilateral cooperation in exchange of information.

Talks on nuclear CBMs begin

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 14. India and Pakistan today began talks on nuclear confidence-building measures (CBMs) and exchanged views on measures such as operationalisation of a hotline between the Foreign Secretaries and the draft agreement on advance notification of missile tests.

The two-day talks are part of the composite dialogue. They would give important inputs to the Foreign Secretary-level talks, scheduled for December 27 and 28. During the second round of the composite dialogue, the Foreign Secretaries would hold deliberations on CBMs on security and Jammu and Kashmir.

At tomorrow's meeting both sides would exchange notes on CBMs related to conventional weapons. Since it is for the first time both sides are sitting across the table to discuss the subject, the meeting is expected to be exploratory in nature.

The Indian delegation at today's talks was headed by the Additional Secretary (International Organisations) in the External Affairs Ministry, Meera Shankar. Tariq Osman Hyder, Additional Secretary in the Pakistan Foreign Ministry, led his country's delegation.

According to officials, the focus of today's talks was on the two agreements reached in the

earlier talks. The draft agreement on advance notification of missile tests came up for scrutiny and indications are that it would be finalised when the Foreign Secretaries meet. Both countries now follow the prac-

tice of informing each other in advance of missile tests and the idea of an agreement to formalise the arrangement with introduction of a timeframe.

Both sides have agreed on establishing a hotline at the level

of Foreign Secretaries to take up any crisis situation on nuclear-related matters.

A formal statement on the two-day talks is expected at the end of the deliberations.

Joint survey of boundary pillars in Sir Creek planned

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 14. India and Pakistan have agreed on conducting a joint survey of the boundary pillars in the disputed Sir Creek area.

According to sources, the survey will start in January first week and is likely to be completed in a year. The survey results would be useful in resolving the dispute over boundary demarcation in the Sir Creek, a 96-km-long strip of water between the Rann of Kutch (in India) and Sindh (in Pakistan).

Understanding on the dates for the survey was arrived at a meeting of the defence officials of both sides.

An official statement said the talks, as part of the ongoing composite dialogue process on issues related to the Sir Creek, were held in "a very cordial and

friendly atmosphere."

The meeting discussed the modalities for a survey of the boundary pillars laid in 1925 in the land portion.

"Both sides positively understood each other's points of view and a consensus generally emerged," a press release by the Pakistan Ministry of Defence said.

Both sides will meet again tomorrow and issue a joint statement. Jamil-ur-Rehman Afridi, Surveyor-General of Pakistan, led the Pakistani side while Girish Kumar, Deputy Surveyor-General of India, headed the Indian side.

Brig. Girish Kumar called on Ahsanul Haq Chaudhri, Pakistan Additional Secretary, Ministry of Defence.

Demarcation of the boundary has been a bone of contention between India and Pakistan for several decades. Eight rounds of

talks held so far have not helped resolve the differences. The history of the issue dates back to 1914, when an agreement was signed between the then Government of Sindh and Rao Maharaj of Kutch.

According to the agreement, both sides agreed to a boundary line running through the middle of the Creek as a border between the two states.

The final demarcation was completed in 1925 in which the boundary was shown by a "green line," depicted on the eastern side of the creek. One side of the Creek is under Pakistan's control whereas there are naval installations of India on the other side.

Pakistan claims that all the 17 Creeks of the Sindh coast belong to it, while India maintains that almost half of the area of the Sir Creek — the 17th one — belongs to it.

Beyond nuclear stability

AS India and Pakistan start talks on nuclear and conventional military confidence-building measures this week in Islamabad, part of the attention of the negotiators should be riveted on those outside the room — the so-called international community.

If normalisation of relations is the central political objective for India in the peace process with Pakistan, Kashmir is the core issue for Islamabad, and promoting military stability between the two nuclear neighbours has been the principal priority in the region for the US and other major powers.

Looking at it cynically, India and Pakistan should have little difficulty in signing off a series of agreements from the well-known laundry list of nuclear CBMs. At the meeting of their nuclear experts last June, India and Pakistan, indeed, got down to the business of reducing the risk of war between the two nations.

They agreed to institute secure lines of communications between the two establishments. India also handed over a draft agreement on the prior notification of ballistic missile flight testing. Both are useful ideas, but not new. They were outlined in the memorandum of understanding signed during the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to Lahore in 1999.

The world is looking at the pace of negotiations and the level of commitment to implement them. It is natural that the two foreign offices will pore over punctuation marks and quibble on technical details to assure themselves that the other is not setting up a hidden unilateral advantage.

New Delhi and Islamabad should know that the willingness of the rest of the world to accept them as part of the official nuclear club depends on the ability of India and Pakistan to responsibly manage their own nuclear relationship. In their last state-



Towards military peace and tranquility on the Indo-Pak border

■ C. RAJA MOHAN

26-6-19/12

ment on the subject, the two foreign secretaries reiterated their self-perception as nuclear weapon powers and demanded a dialogue with other nuclear powers. If India and Pakistan want to be taken seriously, they must show results from their nuclear talks.

At a time when the rules of the global nuclear game are being recast by the Bush Administration, India and Pakistan must find ways to cooperate on the nuclear issue. The two foreign offices should resist the usual temptation to merely score points against each other.

While the nuclear measures are useful, it is more important to

two air forces not to violate each other's airspace. These two agreements were signed in 1991. But there has been no real political ownership of these CBMs in either country. Neither side has been willing to underline the importance of avoiding conventional military tensions.

Breaking from this dismal tradition, at the last round of foreign secretary talks, India proposed a broad package of conventional military CBMs that could lead to greater interaction between the two military establishments and ultimately to military peace on the international border as well as the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir.

There are growing signs that the second round of Indo-Pak talks is sliding into an unseemly sparring on tactical issues

consider mechanisms that reduce the prospects for conventional military tensions. Recurring crises between India and Pakistan since the late 1980s have raised international concerns on the threat of use of nuclear weapons in the subcontinent. But the atomic risk in South Asia cannot be addressed by nuclear-specific measures alone. What the two sides need is a broader agenda of CBMs that will reduce the likelihood of a conventional military confrontation which could escalate to the nuclear level.

India and Pakistan already have a set of such CBMs. These include the notification of army exercises of a certain size near the border and a commitment by the

As it awaits the Pakistani response, New Delhi hopes Islamabad would move away from its rhetoric on a "strategic restraint regime" and proposals for "mutual and balanced force reductions". Islamabad has traditionally sought to link nuclear negotiations with conventional force reductions and inject the notion of military parity between the two nations. India which faces military challenges on other borders will naturally not yield to this framework proposed by Pakistan. Islamabad has also sought to whip up passions over India's "massive" conventional arms acquisitions after the Kargil war in 1999.

But the time has come for In-

dia and Pakistan to move away from the sterile debates of the past towards pragmatic negotiations on conventional military issues which are of strategic importance. Two new factors facilitate a forward-looking approach to conventional military stability between India and Pakistan. First, the objective reality of nuclear parity with India should reduce Pakistan's fear that India will use its alleged conventional military superiority, to the extent that it exists, to political advantage. The lesson from the recent military tensions in the subcontinent has been that India cannot go to a full scale conventional war against Pakistan. Second, India and Pakistan will have to move, over the long term, towards significant cuts in the size of their armed forces, make them more technology-intensive and re-orient them towards dealing with the new security challenges. For India and Pakistan, this agenda of military modernisation mandates itself amid the changing global defence environment.

A three-fold opportunity then awaits India and Pakistan. One, rapidly stabilise the nuclear relationship. Two, take advantage of nuclear parity to bring about predictability and stability to the military conditions on their border and the LoC. Three, use peace and tranquility on the border to make their military forces lean and modern.

A stark military choice confronts India and Pakistan. They could keep boxing around a military stalemate on their borders. Or they could liberate themselves from the burdens of territorial defence to play a role beyond the subcontinent by contributing to the maintenance of international peace.

There are growing signs that the second round of Indo-Pak talks is sliding into an unseemly sparring on tactical issues. India must inject strategic purposefulness into the dialogue on nuclear and military stability with Pakistan.

✓
Agenda Includes Smuggling, Nuclear, Conventional CBMs

Talks with Pak to resume

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 12 DECEMBER

AFTER the stalemate in talks on starting the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service last week, India and Pakistan are set to engage each other once again and take the composite dialogue process forward.

The two sides will hold discussions here on combating smuggling of narcotics, but negotiating skills will be put to test on Tuesday in Islamabad where talks on nuclear and conventional confidence building measures will be held.

Islamabad wants changes incorporated in a draft agreement proposed by New Delhi on giving advance notice to each other before conducting missile tests. Two meetings earlier on the subject have failed to produce an outcome even though both agree it is important to set up mechanisms in place to avoid misunderstandings that could lead to escalation.

In its proposal, the Indian side has suggested upgradation of the existing system in which the two countries inform each other routinely about their missile tests and update the list of loca-



tions of nuclear installations. As part of the understanding in the first round of talks, both sides had agreed to put in place a dedicated and secure hotline between their foreign secretaries, besides one at the military level between DGMOs of the two countries. The Indian delega-

tion to Islamabad comprises officials from the Army, Air Force, Navy besides the ministry of external affairs.

Meanwhile, the talks on combating smuggling of narcotic and psychedelic substances is expected to be held without much differences with both

sides showing keenness to discuss methods for mutual detection and control of smuggling.

The Indian side is led by Narcotics Control Bureau director general Swaraj Puri, while his Pakistani counterpart Maj Gen Nadeem Khan is heading a five member team.

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12/12

India-Pakistan talks on narcotics control starts today

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 12. As part of the ongoing composite dialogue process, India and Pakistan will hold talks, starting tomorrow, to combat the smuggling of narcotics and psychotropic substances. They are also expected to exchange drafts of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that would explore ways to fight the menace.

A five-member delegation from Pakistan, led by its Anti-Narcotics Force Director-General, Nadeem Ahmed, arrived here last night for the two-day talks. The Director-General

of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Swaraj Puri, will head the Indian team.

The two sides will discuss methods for mutual detection of narcotic drugs and ways to control their smuggling, official sources said.

An Indian delegation from the NCB had visited Pakistan in June this year for the first round of talks to check smuggling of narcotic drugs which, in this region, originate mainly from Afghanistan.

Before the start of the talks tomorrow, the Pakistan delegation would call on the Home Minister, Shivraj Patil.

13 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

Commando run

SF-6 11/12
Musharraf manages to bamboozle Bush and Blair

One has to hand it to General Musharraf, he manages to get away with a lot. He goes on repeating the old song about Western mediation in Kashmir despite its repeated rejection all round; Washington and London both know that Delhi would never agree. But he manages to leverage his role as "ally" in the "war against terror" to procure billions of dollars in aid as well as sophisticated arms for Pakistan even while making critical noises about the same war in both British and American media.

He has said that the Osama bin Laden trail has run cold while adroitly turning the tables on Washington, claiming that the Americans have left "voids" on the Afghan side of the border with Pakistan. Of course, he is aided by the fact that there is some truth to his statement — the Americans have been so obsessed with Iraq that they have pretty much left Afghanistan to its own devices. But Musharraf has refused to contribute Pakistani troops for Iraq, nor has he given the Americans much comfort on an issue of critical importance to them — getting access to AQ Khan to find out who he supplied nuclear weapon materials all over.

On Kashmir, Islamabad is stalling progress on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus link as well as rail links between India and Pakistan, and keeping the infrastructure of terror intact. Nor is there progress in reforming *madrasas*, which Musharraf promised in January 2002, or revising Pakistan's outrageous blasphemy laws.

Musharraf displays few signs of moderation while managing to sell himself in Western capitals as representative of a moderate Islam, holding fundamentalist Islam at bay. Washington may believe that it ought not to force the pace in Pakistan, for fear of unleashing anarchy. But there are dangers of administering change in homeopathic doses as well. There is going to be considerable agitation against Musharraf once the December deadline he accepted to take off his uniform, lapses.

By placing all eggs in General Musharraf's basket Washington is backing an unpopular dictator and destroying the basic credibility of its supposed programme to bring democracy to the Muslim world. One should see the harm that can be if Washington rewards his intransigence over Kashmir by pumping in fresh arms for the Pakistani military, instead of pressuring him to take off his uniform and contest elections like any other democratic politician.

11 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

CONCERN OVER US ARMS FOR PAKISTAN

Rumsfeld faces tough talk

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Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 9. — India today told the visiting American Defence Secretary, Mr Donald Rumsfeld, that the US decision to supply arms to Pakistan could have an adverse impact on the "positive sentiments and goodwill" for Washington in this country.

Dr Manmohan Singh and other ministers (including defence minister Mr Pranab Mukherjee, foreign minister Mr Natwar Singh and the national security adviser Mr JN Dixit) told Mr Rumsfeld that the proposed arms supply to Islamabad could also have repercussions on the ongoing peace process between India and Pakistan, which was currently "poised at a critical juncture", the external affairs ministry spokesman said.

Mr Rumsfeld, the most senior member of the US administration to visit this country since Mr George W Bush's re-election in November, said Washington understood New Delhi's sensitivity on the issue, but was "non-committal" about India's concerns about US transfer of sophisticated weapon systems starting an arms race in the sub-continent. "The USA's relations with India and Pakistan are not a zero sum game for us... we are interested in good relations with both countries," he said.

Mr Mukherjee expressed concern about the possible transfer of sophisticated weapons just when the peace process was beginning to take off. The Indian side made two points. First, the weapons, including the F-16 fighter and the P3-C Orion maritime reconnaissance plane, could "spread their shadow over the peace process". Besides, India said, the arms were sophisticated and were certainly not going to be used against the Taliban and Al-Qaida militants on the Pak-Afghan border. When it was pointed out that the terrorist training camps on



Dr Manmohan Singh greets Mr Rumsfeld. — AFP

the other side of the LoC were still in place, he said General Pervez Musharraf was doing his best and he himself had been attacked. Mr Rumsfeld also did not agree to stop the transfers.

The MEA spokesman said it was pointed out to Mr Rumsfeld that Indo-US relations had seen significant transformation during President Bush's first term, and the USA was now perceived as a strategic partner in this country. The meeting was termed "positive".

Mr Rumsfeld also discussed the war against terror and the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, citing India's reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan as a key example of cooperation between the two countries.

Referring to issues that relate to procurement of US weaponry, Mr Rumsfeld said he would examine why there have been delays. At the moment, India has only bought a fire-detection radar — a defensive weapon — and small quantities of weaponry for commandos. There have been discussions regarding the purchase of the Patriot anti-missile system and the P3C Orion reconnaissance plane.

10 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

Little headway in talks on bus service

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, DEC. 7. Indian officials suggested today that an "entry permit" be used along with the passport by passengers wanting to travel on the proposed Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, as talks with their Pakistani counterparts on travel documents appeared to reach a deadlock.

However, Pakistan showed little sign of budging from its "no passport" stand — making it clear that only local identity documents could be carried by Kashmiris, who wanted to use the bus service.

According to the Indian side, the Pakistani delegation insisted that it would not accept the proposed "entry permits" or passports in the two hours of talks that took place today. Though the talks will continue tomorrow, the likelihood of any agreement is slim. However, both sides are "committed" to continuing these discussions.

The Indian side formally informed Pakistan that as far as they were concerned it would be the "entry permit" and not the passport that would be stamped. The passport would be used merely as an identity document, but this was not acceptable to the Pakistanis.

A Pakistani source told this correspondent that they had also suggested that the use of the bus service be restricted to Kashmiris.

Pakistan, the source added, did not, in any way, want to take away from the disputed nature of the territory on either side of the LoC. The carrying of the passport, too, Pakistan felt, could become a problem in the future.

'Not serious'

Indian sources familiar with the talks claimed that the Pakistani side was not serious about starting the bus service, a proposal made by New Delhi in October 2003.

The sources said that in order to accommodate Pakistan's sensitivities, India had proposed that passports be not stamped and a separate entry document (permit) be issued by the High Commissions in New Delhi and Islamabad to the passengers. There would be no visa pasted on the passport.

Also, the Indian side is clear that such a bus service could not be restricted to Kashmiris holding Indian passports, but would have to be extended to all Indians. It was not possible to make a distinction between one group of Indians and another on ethnic grounds.

The sources are of the view that if the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service begins operations it would detract from the long-held Pakistani position that Kashmir is a "flashpoint" in South Asia. If the bus service gets going, then the world would get used to the idea that things have become normal in the region, they feel.

08 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

Musharraf "very optimistic" of dialogue process with India

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, DEC. 4. The Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, says he is "very optimistic" about the dialogue process with India and that the two countries are "moving well" on a number of issues, including confidence-building.

"We are moving well on the issue of confidence-building measures and also the dialogue process towards the resolution of disputes. We hope that we will move forward on the resolution of all disputes, and the core dispute which happens to be Kashmir. And we are moving forward on that. We are hopeful and we are very optimistic of the future," Gen. Musharraf told reporters after his meeting with the United States President, George W. Bush, at the White House here.

Mr. Bush said he and Gen. Musharraf touched on a range of issues including relations between India and Pakistan. "We reviewed the relationship be-

tween India and Pakistan. He has showed great courage in that relationship leading towards what we hope will be a peaceful solution of what has been a historically difficult problem," Mr. Bush told reporters after a rare Saturday morning meeting with Gen. Musharraf.

Sale of F-16s

Asked if the subject of F-16s did come up at the meeting, Gen. Musharraf said: "We discussed the issue and that is all I would like to say." There have been persistent reports of Pakistan keenly looking at the F-16s even as the Bush administration has said that while this may be on the table, no final decision has been made.

One of the top items on the agenda is the issue of Osama bin Laden with some in the U.S. administration not quite happy that Islamabad has militarily scaled back the hunt on the border areas with Afghanistan. Gen. Musharraf acknowledged

that this subject did come up in the discussions but in an overall framework.

"Of course, we discussed terrorism in its entire complexity and within that hunting every terrorist was discussed. The operations against terrorists on our borders was discussed," Gen. Musharraf said. He pointed out that in the 30-40 minutes meeting with Mr. Bush it was not possible to get into the details of tactical issues and problems. "Of course, we discussed the issue of... fighting terrorism. In all its complexity," he said.

Gen. Musharraf said he had come to Washington to congratulate Mr. Bush on his election win and the opportunity to discuss all issues — international, "regional from Pakistan's point of view" and Pakistan-United States bilateral relationship.

"On the whole, I think it was a very wholesome meeting. I think it was an extremely positive meeting. And there is total consonance of views on all is-

sues," Gen. Musharraf said.

Palestinian issue

Both Mr. Bush and Gen. Musharraf at different times have stressed that the Palestinian issue was brought up and discussed. "I assured President Musharraf that there is an opportunity at hand to work toward the development of a Palestinian state and peace in the Middle East. I told him this will be a priority of my administration. The goal is two states living side by side in peace and security," Mr. Bush said in the joint media availability.

"... As far as Pakistan is concerned we are very clear that we believe in the right of the Palestinians and Israelis to have their own states. Within that whatever I can do I will contribute but I am very glad to say that President Bush is absolutely concerned and he thinks that it's a priority with him to resolve the Palestinian dispute and create a Palestinian state," Gen. Musharraf said.

রেল নিয়ে ভারত-পাক মতৈক্য

ইসলামাবাদ, ৩ ডিসেম্বর:
রাজস্থানের মুম্বাও এবং সিন্ধুর
খোঁকরাপারের মধ্যে রেল যোগাযোগ
পুনরায় চালু করার বিষয়ে একমত
হয়েছে ভারত ও পাকিস্তান।
ইসলামাবাদে দু'দেশের রেল দফতরের
বৈঠকের পরে একটি যৌথ বিবৃতিতে
এ কথা জানানো হয়েছে। দীর্ঘ ৪০
বছর ধরে বন্ধ এই রেলপথকে পুনরায়
চালু করতে দু'দেশের পক্ষ থেকে কী
কী ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে, সে ব্যাপারেও
দু'দিনের আলোচনার পরে প্রতিনিধিরা
একমত হয়েছেন। তবে কবে এই রেল
যোগাযোগ ব্যবস্থা চালু হবে, সে
সম্পর্কে বিবৃতিতে মন্তব্য করা হয়নি।

ভারতের বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ
সম্প্রতি জানিয়েছিলেন, আগামী
বছরের ২ অক্টোবর, মহাত্মা গান্ধীর
জন্মদিনে এই রেলপথ চালু করা হবে।
ভারতীয় প্রতিনিধিরাও বৈঠকে আগামী
বছরের সেপ্টেম্বর বা অক্টোবরে চালু
করার প্রস্তাব দেন। কিন্তু পাক
প্রতিনিধিরা জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন,
রেলপথের পরিকাঠামো তৈরির কাজ
সম্পূর্ণ করতে পাকিস্তানের অন্তত
দু'বছর সময় লাগবে। — পি টি আই

04 DEC 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

03 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Indo-Pak foreign secys' meet deferred

Agencies
Islamabad, December 1

THE TWO-DAY Foreign Secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan — scheduled to take place here on December 23-24 to kick-start the second round of the composite dialogue process — have been put off to December 27-28, an official announcement said today.

The rescheduling of the dates was done at the request of the Indian government, a Pakistan Foreign Ministry statement here said.

Besides reviewing the progress in the talks on various issues, the Foreign Secretaries would discuss peace and security, CBMs and the Jammu and Kashmir issue. They will also fix the schedule for official-level talks on is-

Learning poll lessons

CHIEF ELECTION commissioner of Pakistan Justice Irshad Hasan Khan held detailed discussions with his Indian counterpart, I.S. Krishnamurthy on electoral management during a two-day meet, which concluded in New Delhi on Wednesday. The Pak CEC showed keen interest in EVMs. He asked Krishnamurthy to visit Pak to study its electoral process.

HTC, New Delhi

such as Siachen, Wullar Barrage, Sir Creek, terrorism and drug trafficking, economic and commercial cooperation and pro-

motion of friendly exchanges in various fields.

Meanwhile, Railway officials of the two countries will meet here tomorrow to discuss the resumption of rail links between Kokharapar and Munabao, connecting Rajasthan and Sindh province of Pakistan.

The two countries had earlier discussed a proposal to run a bus service between Kokhrapar and Munabao, but later shifted to the idea of a rail link which, External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh recently said, was likely to begin on October 2 next year.

The rail talks will be followed by parleys between Coast Guard officials of the two countries on December 3-4 in New Delhi to discuss an MoU to establish di-

rect communication links between the two sides.

Also, officials of the two countries will meet in New Delhi on December 7-8 to resolve differences over the modalities to run the bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. Pakistan opposes the use of passport and visas for passengers to travel by the bus and wants the travellers to use identification certificates provided by local officials.

The bus talks will be followed by separate expert-level meetings on nuclear and conventional CBMs from December 14 to 16 in Islamabad. Also, the officials of the two countries are scheduled to conduct a joint survey of boundary pillars in the Sir Creek Area on December 14-15.

Delhi, Islamabad differ on rail links time schedule

Agencies
Islamabad, December 2

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN India and Pakistan cropped up over the time schedule to restore the Munabao-Khokhrapar rail link, which was stopped 39 years ago, as the railway officials of the two countries met here on Thursday to discuss the issue.

On the opening day of the two-day talks today, India suggested running the trains by September next year after carrying out necessary track repairs while Pakistan said it required two years to make the infrastructure ready for starting the service between Munabao in Rajasthan and Khokhrapar in Pakistan's Sindh province.

Indian officials subsequently said the two sides differed on the schedule to run the train service. "It appeared that Pakistan is not very keen to run the train service," an Indian official, who attended the talks, said on condition of anonymity.

The Indian external affairs minister, K. Natwar Singh, recently said India was hopeful that the rail link would be restored by October 2 next year.

Pakistan, however, remained non-committal. A seven-member Indian delegation headed by L.R. Thapar, additional Member, Railway Board, held talks with Pakistani delegation led by secretary Railways Board Zaeem Chaudhry.

Earlier, Chaudhary sounded optimistic about the talks and said a "breakthrough" was likely. "I think the two sides agree that the talks should produce good results to benefit the people of the two countries. Restoration of the railway link will be a gift for the people of the two countries," Chaudhary said.

Restoration of tracks, number of trains and passengers, and other related issues would be discussed during the two-day talks. If agreed, it will be the second train service between the two countries.



Top Pakistani railway official Zaeem Ahmed Chaudhry (right) with Indian official L.R. Thapar in Islamabad on Thursday.

REUTERS

Kashmir is ripe for solution: Pervez

PAKISTAN PRESIDENT Pervez Musharraf has said that disputes like Kashmir and Palestine are ripe for solution and cannot be sidelined any longer.

Speaking Buenos Aires, Musharraf reaffirmed that he was still open to having negotiations with India on Kashmir and refuted charges that he had put forward a concrete proposal for granting independence to that region.

Asked about Pakistan-India negotiations, Musharraf claimed that they were going along on expected lines, but cautioned that both Islamabad and New Delhi needed to be very flexible and sincere if they wanted to reach an agreement. He also said that there was a dire need for the introduction of a long-term strategic plan to fight the root causes of terrorism.

ANI, Islamabad

03 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Indo-Pak standstill

51-8 Reverse for Hurriyat 35/11

An unstated re-stating of previously stated positions. That, pardon the officialese, was the best that could be said about the meeting of the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan. For while there was talk of how "out of the box" moves are an imperative, it is pretty clear that neither side is ready to make them. Yet there is reason for satisfaction that despite discordant noises earlier, Shaukat Aziz's meetings in New Delhi were conducted without rancour. This means there is hope for a dialogue on the host of issues to which both have been held hostage these past 50 years. Attempts at military solutions have floundered and nuclear-status has virtually foreclosed options of a conventional bang-bang. To be fair to both sides this was no "summit" and the Pak premier's visit was essentially Saarc-centric. If expectations of substantial forward movement were raised, the media must assume a major part of blame. On Indo-Pak issues there is a vicious circle of our own creation. The danger is that popular opinion is media-generated, hence fickle, while the situation demands sustained pressure on the leadership to take bold initiatives. Obviously conditions are not ripe for that, so faith must be restored in the various official-level engagements that comprise the composite dialogue process that alone will permit political and diplomatic breakthroughs. But there was a bit more to the recent interaction than Pakistan's reverting to the theory of Kashmir being the "core issue" and India sticking to the line that it was no territorial dispute. Due note must be taken of Pakistan's shutting the door on intense economic activity while politics remains on the back-burner. Is it wary of trade waves strong enough to wash away the staple anti-India diet upon which internal politics is nurtured? Or on that front too does it fear India's growing strength?

Yes, Shaukat Aziz's sojourn registered no gains, but Hurriyat leaders were rapped on the knuckles for failing to sink differences and provide Pakistan with a credible "front" to project as the voice and face of the Kashmiri people. That development could have major implications, though it must be remembered that the APHC's differences have roots in power equations rather than distinctly "hard" or "soft" groupings within the conglomerate. New Delhi must seek to capitalise on the development, but not in the Home Ministry's style of 'one good snub deserves another'.

30 NOV 2004 THE STATESMAN

PM accepts Pervez view on Sonia

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 27. — Mrs Sonia Gandhi will now be the mutually accepted interlocutor between India and Pakistan in resolving the Kashmir dispute. In an announcement made at the Rashtrapati Bhavan today, the Prime Minister endorsed Pakistan President Gen Pervez Musharraf's recent observation asking Mrs Gandhi to play a "proactive role" in resolving Kashmir and other issues.

Dr Manmohan Singh also announced that he has accepted the invitation of the Pakistan President to visit that country. "I shall visit Pakistan some time next year," he said.

Mrs Gandhi is the president of the Congress that leads the coalition government at the Centre. She enjoys a special status in the government. Besides, she is also the chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance. Given a role that is above the Prime Minister in brokering a deal on Kashmir with Pakistan may not find favour with Mrs Gandhi who is known for her disinclination in playing any role on a sensitive issue like Kashmir and that too with Pakistan as a party.

Like the Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi too has an invitation from Pakistan to visit that coun-



try. She is yet to decide when will she visit the country.

Gen Musharraf said recently that he was quite confident that in case Mrs Gandhi takes interest and assumes a proactive role, both countries may see a breakthrough in relations and the contentious issues would be resolved. Dr Singh is in agreement with Gen Musharraf on this and said, "Yes, she is the Congress president and chairperson of the UPA".

Gen Musharraf's optimism lies in Mrs Gandhi's position in the UPA government where she can move other political parties like the Communists to work for a consensus on the Kashmir issue that would be acceptable to both the countries. When Gen Musharraf talked of Mrs Gandhi

working for a political consensus in India he did not forget to mention the BJP, indicating that Mrs Gandhi would be able to involve the opposition parties for an all-round agreement on Kashmir.

Dr Singh declined to comment on Prime Minister Mr Shaukat Aziz's statement that Pakistan was not keen to accord MFN status to India for bilateral trade till some progress is reported on the Kashmir front. "We conveyed our views and they conveyed their views", Dr Singh remarked.

28 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

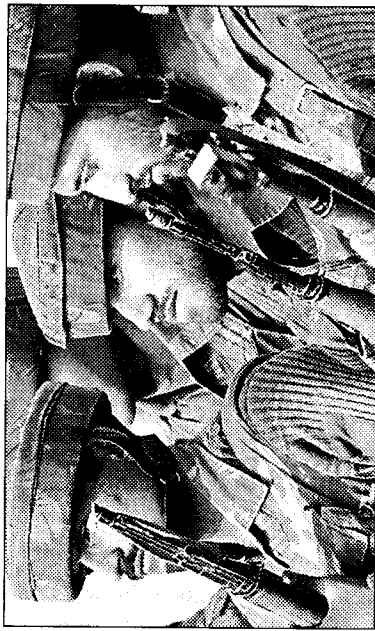
Foreign Minister Says It's Unrealistic To Consider Body The Only Voice Of Kashmir

Natwar questions Pak stance on Hurriyat

New Delhi
26 NOVEMBER

QUESTIONING the importance being given by Pakistan to separatist Hurriyat leaders, India has said there was "something fundamentally wrong" with Islamabad's understanding of realities in Jammu and Kashmir and hoped that this would not be an "irritant" in bilateral ties. "In my opinion, if they (Pakistan) think that only Hurriyat represents the people of Kashmir, then there is something fundamentally wrong with their understanding of realities in J&K," external affairs minister K. Natwar Singh told Karan Thapar on CNBC programme Tonight at 10.

He was asked whether Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz inviting leaders of Hurriyat factions during his visit here and having a marathon meeting with them amounted to interference in India's internal affairs. "No, I don't think they are interfering in



VALE OF CONTENTION: Army personnel (top) and Natwar Singh

the internal affairs. But in my own view, and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said the same thing, they are being unrealistic," he said.

Natwar Singh said the government did not mind Pakistani leaders meeting Hurriyat factions and hoped that this would not be an irritant in relations between the two countries. He said the

Hurriyat was not willing to talk to the government "but they are willing to talk to the other side".

He pointed out that the Prime Minister had invited Karan Singh, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti for the lunch he hosted for his Pakistani counterpart and had told the visiting leader that "you want to meet the representatives of people of



Kashmir, here they are".

On the Pakistan premier's contention that Islamabad was unlikely to grant Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to India unless the Kashmir issue itself was resolved, Natwar Singh said: "This is one element which is coming

in the way of the gas pipeline (between India and Iran via Pakistan) going through."

India, he said, hoped that it would be able to persuade Pakistan "because if this is the condition, then you cannot move forward". When asked if it will be a "full stop" in case this was the condition, he said: "On this issue, yes." Observing that Mr Aziz's meetings with Indian leaders "went off well", Mr Singh described the Pakistan premier as "well-informed, very articulate, distinguished banker and one who has facts on his fingertips".

Asked about the verbal cross-fire following President Musharraf's suggestion that some zones of Kashmir on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC) could be demilitarised, granted independence or kept under joint control or UN mandate, he said the "misunderstanding" has been cleared with Mr Aziz and Pakistan foreign minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri. — PTI

Boxed in

Not much headway on Aziz's trip

Despite the smiles and bonhomie, Pakistani prime minister Shaukat Aziz's parleys in Delhi have belied their promise in the sense that while the air was thick with exhortations to think "out of the box," there have been precious few examples of such thinking. General Musharraf's plan to divide Jammu and Kashmir into seven regions is only a recast of the Owen-Dixon plan of 1950; there were good reasons why it wasn't workable then and those reasons remain. Musharraf's contention that the division of Jammu and Kashmir he envisages is not based on religion because it factors in ethnicity is disingenuous. As any social science student can tell us, religion is a component of ethnicity.

Multiculturalism was not in vogue in 1950; whereas map-making, in which people who find themselves on the wrong side of lines drawn on a map have to undergo forced migration, is not in fashion now. In any case, Aziz now contends that the proposal was only meant for "internal debate" in Pakistan rather than one that would be formally put to India. But the good part of Musharraf's proposal is that it forced Delhi to come up with its own proposal for resolving autonomy for both Indian and Pakistani-held Kashmir, and soft borders between them. This is a workable proposal and a basis for negotiation Islamabad can no longer claim, that Delhi is "skirting the issue" of Kashmir.

Lack of progress is also evident in Islamabad's refusal even to grant most-favoured nation status to India, which is a requirement of signatories to WTO. If this is Islamabad's position, then the prospects of a South Asian free trade area that was supposed to come into existence in 2006 look bleak indeed. If such dilatoriness continues, Delhi must take it up the most-favoured nation issue with the WTO and lodge a formal complaint.

The gas pipeline project, which Islamabad is promoting as a means of earning foreign exchange, cannot come about in the absence of normal economic relations with India. Islamabad's insistence on Hurriyat being regarded as the sole representative of the Kashmiris is unsustainable, and looks risible when the Hurriyat couldn't form a united delegation to see the Pakistani PM in separate batches.

The problem with thinking out of the box may be that Musharraf himself is in a box; moreover, it is a box that he has freely chosen. He has relied on the fundamentalists of the MMA to build a political base for himself, but the fundamentalists will not give him much space to manoeuvre on Kashmir, nor will they forgive him for turning the army against the Al Qaeda. He has recently released Asif Zardari, Benazir Bhutto's husband, and had a long phone conversation with Nawaz Sharif, which suggests he is trying to build bridges to the democratic opposition. Perhaps he is trying to come out of his own box.

27 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

‘অসহিষ্ণু’ পাকিস্তান, কাশ্মীর নিয়ে ডিসেম্বরে বৈঠকে দীক্ষিত-তারিক

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৫ নভেম্বর: জানুয়ারি মাসে ঢাকায় সার্ক সম্মেলনের আগে কাশ্মীরের সমাধানসূত্র খুঁজতে ফের বৈঠকে বসবেন ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা জে এন দীক্ষিত ও তারিক আজিজ।

সেপ্টেম্বরে মাসে নিউ ইয়র্কে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের অধিবেশনের অবসরে দীক্ষিত ও আজিজ আলোচনায় বসেছিলেন। তার পরে তিন মাসে দু’জনের কোনও বৈঠক হয়নি। ‘অসহিষ্ণু’ পাকিস্তান ভারতের কাছে দ্রুত এই আলোচনা শুরু করার আবেদন জানিয়েছে। মনমোহন সিংহও পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে এ ব্যাপারে সম্মতি জানিয়েছেন। ডিসেম্বরের শেষে এই বৈঠক কোথায় হবে, তা অবশ্য জানা যায়নি। বৈঠকে যে সূত্র মিলবে, তার ভিত্তিতে ঢাকায় মনমোহন-মুশারফ দ্বিপাক্ষিক আলোচনা করতে পারেন বলে জানা গিয়েছে।

দু’দিনের দিল্লি সফর শেষে আজ পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী শওকত আজিজ যেমন ইসলামাবাদ পৌঁছে সামগ্রিক শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া সম্পর্কে আশা প্রকাশ করেছেন, তেমনই বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ বলেছেন, গত ছ’মাসে ভারত-পাক সম্পর্কের অভূতপূর্ব উন্নতি হয়েছে। তবে ভারত মনে করছে, পাকিস্তানের পক্ষে কাশ্মীরের দাবি তোলাটা অত্যন্ত স্বাভাবিক এবং এটা রাজনৈতিক

বাধ্যবাধকতা। কিন্তু কাশ্মীর ছাড়া অর্থনীতি নিয়েও যে সার্বিক আলোচনার নজির এ বার পাকিস্তান রেখেছে, সেটা তাদের পুরনো নীতি থেকে অনেকটাই সরে আসা বলে মনে করছে ভারতের বিদেশ মন্ত্রক। আগে পাকিস্তান সার্বিক আলোচনারই বিরুদ্ধে ছিল। এখন পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী প্রকাশ্যে ‘সার্বিক’ আলোচনার কথা বলছেন। দু’বছর আগে ইসলামাবাদের সার্ক সম্মেলনে পাকিস্তান কাশ্মীর সমাধান না-হলে আর্থিক চুক্তি করবে না বলেছিল, সে জন্য সম্মেলনই ভঙুল হয়ে যায়। আর এখন পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী, পেট্রোলিয়ামমন্ত্রী থেকে শুরু করে সংস্কৃতিমন্ত্রী পর্যন্ত প্রতিনিধিদল নিয়ে দিল্লিতে হাজির হচ্ছেন নানা বিষয়ে আলোচনা জন্য।

মানচিত্র পরিবর্তন না-করার সিদ্ধান্তে অটল থেকে কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক গোষ্ঠী সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে যে, পাকিস্তানকে মূলত তিনটি প্রস্তাব দেওয়া যেতে পারে:

- কাশ্মীরে স্বশাসন দিতে মনমোহনের সরকার রাজি। সংবিধান মেনে কাশ্মীর সরকারের ক্ষমতা সম্প্রসারণ ঘটিয়ে কাশ্মীরি মানুষকে স্বশাসন দেওয়ার বিষয়টি আলোচনা করতে রাজি কেন্দ্র।

- হরিয়ত নেতাদের পাকিস্তানে যাওয়ার অনমুতি দেওয়া হবে। কিন্তু কোনও ত্রিপাক্ষিক বৈঠক হবে না।

- মানচিত্র বদল হবে না। ফলে কাশ্মীরের বিভাজন চলবে না।

এই প্রস্তাবে নিয়ন্ত্রণেরথাকে আন্তর্জাতিক সীমান্ত হিসাবে গ্রহণ করার রাজনৈতিক সম্ভাবনা থেকে যাচ্ছে। মানচিত্র বদল না-হলে পাক-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীর সম্পর্কে ভারত আর দাবি জানাবে না—এমন একটা কূটনৈতিক ইঙ্গিত থাকছে বলে অনেকে মনে করছেন। বাজপেয়ী প্রধানমন্ত্রী থাকাকালীন ব্রজেশ মিশ্র তারিক আজিজের সঙ্গে যে আলোচনা শুরু করেছিলেন, জে এন দীক্ষিত সেটাকেই এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে পারেন।

পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী শওকত আজিজের দু’দিনের সফর শেষে আজ বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ বলেন, “আমাদের পাকিস্তানের বন্ধুরা জম্মু ও কাশ্মীর ছাড়াও আরও অন্য অনেক বিষয়ে কথা বলতে চান। এই পরিবর্তন খুবই ভাল।” এর ব্যাখ্যায় তিনি বলেন, “সঙ্ঘাতজনক রাজনৈতিক সমাধানের পথ গড়ে দিতে পারে অর্থনীতিই।” এই সঙ্গেই নটবর আজ ঘোষণা করেছেন, রাজস্থানের মুন্ডাওয়া ও সিন্ধু প্রদেশের খোকরাপারের মধ্যে রেল যোগাযোগ ২০০৫-এর ২ অক্টোবর চালু হবে।

নটবর বলেছেন, “পাকিস্তানের সন্দেহ ছিল, শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া হয়তো মধুর হয়ে যাবে। আমরা শওকতকে নিশ্চিত করেছি যে, শান্তি প্রক্রিয়ায় কোনও ‘রিভার্স গিয়ার’ রাখা হবে না।”

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ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Two sides agree to disagree

J&K not a territorial issue, PM tells Aziz

Nilova Roy Chaudhury
in New Delhi

Nuke hotline

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 24. — India and Pakistan are in the process of establishing a nuclear hotline at the foreign secretary-level to ensure confidence as well as to avert any untoward incident, according to a media report here today.

The technical details for establishing such a dedicated link between the two countries were under consideration and could take time in materialising, the *Nation* daily quoted Pakistani officials as saying. The Indian side has given the technical details of such a link to Pakistan. The decision to establish the hotline was taken at the expert-level talks earlier this year, it added. — PTI

Nov. 24. — While echoing the Indian Prime Minister's contention that "out of the box" approaches were required to resolve the J&K issue, Pakistani Prime Minister Mr Shaukat Aziz today said the centrality of the "core issue" (J&K) and the need to resolve it was the way to carry the bilateral dialogue process forward.

Dr Manmohan Singh said the issue "was not territorial" and there could be no further redrawing of borders, officials said. Dr Singh also mentioned that what he had said in Srinagar ("no further partitions and redrawing of borders") was "no different" from what he had told Gen. Pervez Musharraf in New York.

Mr Aziz did not present any proposals, and contended that a "formula" suggested by Gen. Musharraf recently was "intended for an internal debate" in Pakistan, not as a formal proposal to India. But it couldn't be "like picking cherries", Mr Aziz said, referring to what Islamabad alleges is New Delhi's attempts to skirt the issue.

The "core issue" needed to be resolved, he said, and both countries needed to go "beyond stated positions" for sustained peace and security in the region. "Tangible progress" towards a resolution to the Kashmir issue had to be "in tandem with" other issues, including economic ones.

Delhi contends that it is not skirting the issue. According to the foreign secretary, Mr Shyam Saran, the composite dialogue process deals with J&K and other problems between the two countries, and "building mutual trust" (through crucial CBMs) and heightened people-to-people contacts would, in

the long term, lead to an overall improvement in relations.

The Prime Ministers and their delegations met for over 90 minutes (45 minutes with "restricted" teams of officials and the rest over lunch) for "positive" talks at which they decided to continue the mechanism for the composite dialogue process.

Speaking at an interactive meeting organised by the CII and FICCI tonight, Mr Aziz said: "The Indo-Pak relationship was not ordained to remain adversarial perpetually..." He added: "We are working towards customs cooperation, setting up an arbitration council, working instrument on avoidance of double taxation and on promotion and protection of investments."

Earlier today, Mr Aziz had said that granting of most favoured nation status to India was not possible until "we can demonstrate tangible progress on J&K".

India favours talks on gas pipeline, page 8



ECONOMISTS-TURNED PMs: Dr Manmohan Singh greets Mr Shaukat Aziz at Hyderabad House, New Delhi, on Wednesday. — AFP

Hurriyat leaders fail to unite

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 24.— Various factions of Kashmiri separatist groups, including the Hurriyat Conference, failed to present a united front, causing some discomfiture to the Pakistani Prime Minister, Mr Shaukat Aziz, who had to meet them separately till late into last night. The other problem, diplomats said, stemming from the

lack of a united front was that Mr Aziz was unable to propose the presence of the Hurriyat Conference as a party in the dialogue on Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr Aziz said this morning that for "any sustainable improvement" in the India-Pakistan relationship, the "wishes of the Kashmiri people" had to be taken into account.

"The Kashmiris are the third important stakeholder

in this dispute," the Pakistan PM said, speaking to a group of mediapersons. "And the APHC is in large part, representative of that thinking."

According to a senior official, India is clear that "there is an elected government in Jammu and Kashmir" and the government is willing to initiate an internal dialogue with any section of civil society, but "there is no question" of a "third place at the dialogue table between India

and Pakistan" on J&K or any bilateral issues.

J&K grenade attack

Fifteen persons, including five women, were injured when an unidentified militant hurled a grenade in the crowded KC Chowk in Jammu around 7 p.m. today, police said. This is the first explosion here after the civil secretariat shifted from summer capital of Srinagar.

India favours talks on gas pipeline

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 24. — India today urged the Pakistan Premier, Mr Shaukat Aziz, to have ministerial level discussions either in Delhi or Islamabad on the \$4.16-billion India-Iran gas pipeline.

The formal request was made by the petroleum minister, Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar, during his 45-minute meeting with Mr Aziz. Mr Aiyar, however, made it clear that the proposed gas pipeline could be set up only if economic ties between the neighbours improved.

"It should not be that in one field we race ahead and not in others," Mr Aiyar said immediately after coming out of the meeting. The Pakistan foreign secretary, Mr Riaz Khokhar, who was also present, said the gas pipeline is a very important project not just for India and Pakistan but for the whole region, including Iran.

"We discussed the energy scene in both countries and the importance of gas for development," Mr Aiyar said. The 2,775-km-long pipeline project from Iran to India is beneficial for Pakistan as well as for India.

While India would receive gas at a very economical rate, Pakistan is likely to earn 600 to 800 million dollars annually as transit fee from the proposed pipeline.

Though the project has been on the anvil for the past decade, it could not take constructive shape because of the ongoing tension between the two sub-continental neighbours.

The Indian government has sought

security guarantee of physical infrastructure of the pipeline from the Pakistan government and an assurance of uninterrupted gas supply in the pipeline passing through Pakistan.

Iran has also been pursuing the pipeline proposal that would save millions of dollars to the Indian government in gas transportation. On the other hand Iran would get an assured buyer for its huge natural gas reserves.



Petroleum minister, Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar (R) shakes hands with Pakistani Prime Minister, Mr Shaukat Aziz at a meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday. Mr Aiyar told Mr Aziz that talks on a proposed gas pipeline from Iran to India through Pakistan should go ahead as part of a push for more regional trade. — AFP

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THE STATESMAN

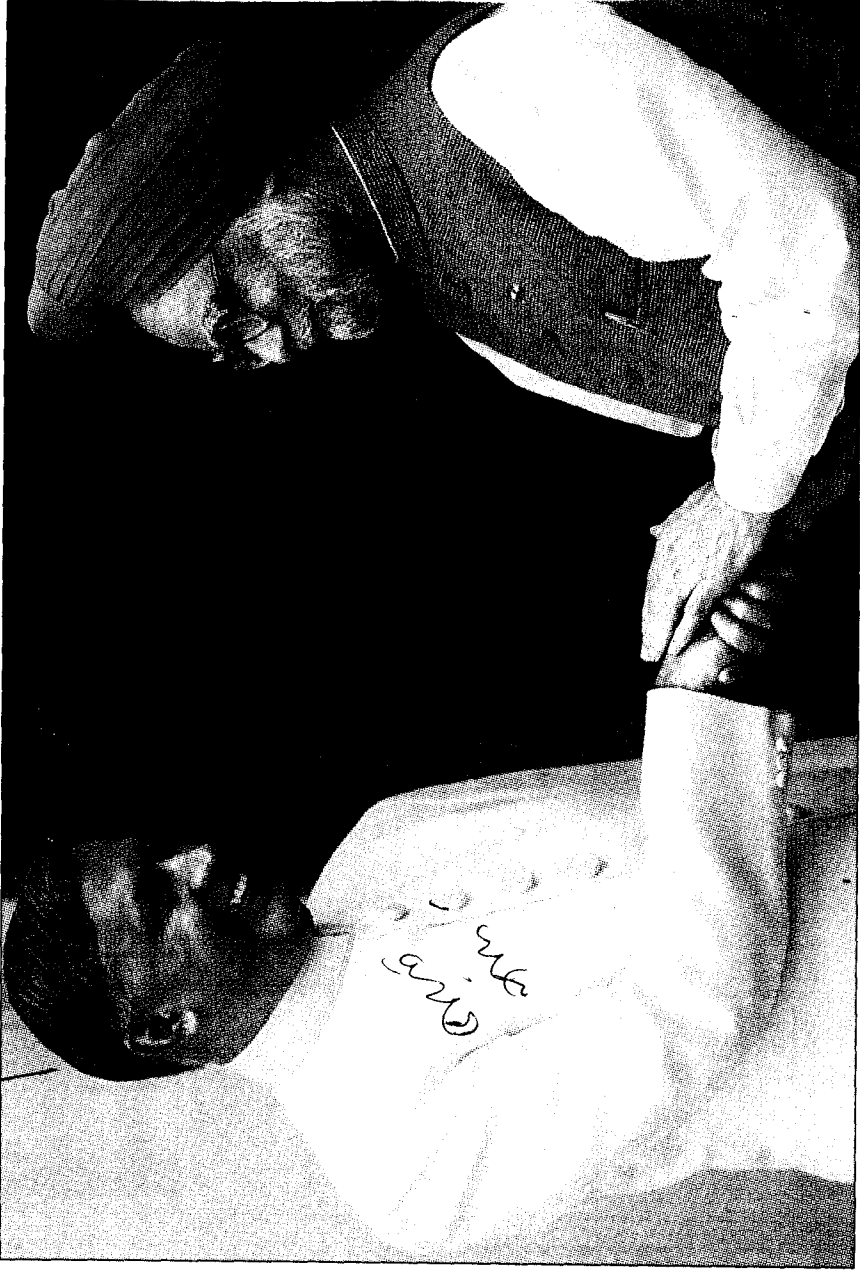
নবমে-গরমে ভারত-পাক আলোচনা

কাশ্মীর না-মিটলে 'সুবিধা'ও মিলবে না

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৪
নভেম্বর: ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন
সিংহ : কোনও পরিস্থিতিতেই নতুন
করে আঁকা হবে না ভারতের মা-চিত্রা
পাকিস্তানের প্রধানমন্ত্রী শওকত
আজিজ : কাশ্মীর না মিটলে ভারতকে
সবচেয়ে সুবিধাপ্রাপ্ত দেশের স্বীকৃতি
দেওয়া হবে না।

আজকের বহুপ্রতীক্ষিত ভারত-
পাক শীর্ষ বৈঠকে এ ভাবেই দু'দেশের
প্রধানমন্ত্রী নিজের নিজের অবস্থান
ব্যক্ত করেছেন। তবে দু'পক্ষের
নীতিগত অবস্থানের কথা স্পষ্ট
করলেও আলোচনায় পারস্পরিক
সহযোগিতার দিকটিও উপেক্ষিত
হয়নি। বরং, এ নিয়ে দু'দেশের তরফে
আজ বিভিন্ন প্রস্তাব বিনিময়ও হয়েছে।

সম্প্রতি শ্রীনগরে কাশ্মীর সীমান্ত
অপরিবর্তিত রাখার অঙ্গীকার
সম্পর্কিত তাঁর মন্তব্যের পুনরুক্তি করে
মনমোহন আজ প্রকৃতপক্ষে পাকিস্তান
প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের
প্রস্তাবে জল ঢেলে দিয়েছেন। সূত্রের
খবর, প্রধানমন্ত্রী জানিয়েছেন, বর্তমান
জম্মু-কাশ্মীর সরকারকে অতিরিক্ত
ক্ষমতা দেওয়ার প্রস্তাব নিয়ে
আলোচনা করা যেতে পারে। পাক
অধিকৃত কাশ্মীর নিয়ে আলোচনা
চলতে পারে। কিন্তু কোনও ভাবেই
ভারতের সীমান্ত পরিবর্তন করে নয়।
জানুয়ারি মাসে ঢাকায় সার্ক সম্মেলনে



দুই প্রধানমন্ত্রী। পাকিস্তানের শওকত, ভারতের মনমোহন। দিল্লির হায়দরাবাদ হাউসে বৈঠকের আগে। বুধবার। — এ এফ পি

শেহীদ দোতা করতে এসেও কাশ্মীর নীতির সঙ্গে সঙ্গতি রেখেই এই
কূটনৈতিক আবহাওয়া কিছুটা গরম
হয়ে রইল আজকের বৈঠকের পর।
অন্য দিকে, পাকিস্তানের কাছ
থেকে 'সুবিধিক সুবিধাপ্রাপ্ত দেশ'-এর
স্বীকৃতি পাওয়ার দাবি প্রসঙ্গে কঠোর
মানোভাব নিয়েছেন শওকত। সাফ
জানিয়েছেন, বিষয়টি কাশ্মীর প্রসঙ্গের
সঙ্গে অঙ্গাঙ্গী ভাবে জড়িত। সূত্রের
খবর, মুশারফের নির্দেশে পাকিস্তানের
বৈঠকে ইরান থেকে পাইপলাইন
আনার ব্যাপারে সহযোগিতা চান
পেট্রোলিয়ামমন্ত্রী মণিশঙ্কর আইয়ার।
চান 'সার্বভৌমিক সুবিধাপ্রাপ্ত দেশ'-এর
স্বীকৃতিও। বৈঠকের পর মণিশঙ্কর
বলেন, "পাকিস্তানকে আগে যে
অনুরোধ করা হয়েছিল তাই
পুনরাবৃত্তি হল। শওকতকে অনুরোধ
করেছি ইরান থেকে গ্যাস আনার
বাণিজ্যপথ হিসাবে পাকিস্তানকে
বাবহারের অনুমতি দিতে। এতে

পারস্পরিক নির্ভরতা বাড়বে।"
সার্ক মঞ্চকে কী ভাবে পারস্পরিক
সহযোগিতার মাধ্যমে আরও শক্তিশালী
করা যায় এই নিয়ে আজ দু'তরফের
নেতৃত্বের মধ্যে বিভিন্ন প্রস্তাবগুচ্ছ
বিনিময় হয়েছে। কথা হয়েছে,
'সামগ্রিক আলোচনাকে এগিয়ে নিয়ে
যাওয়া', 'আস্থার্থক পদক্ষেপ',
'শান্তিক্রিয়া' নিয়ে। কিন্তু ইরান থেকে
এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

Shaukat Aziz starts on right note

Saurabh Shukla
New Delhi, November 23

AHEAD OF Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's summit meeting with his Pakistani counterpart, Shaukat Aziz, the mood is positive.

The visit, though, is largely aimed at giving a broad direction to the peace process and trying to move forward on the issue of terrorism and J&K, than taking any big decisions.

Protocol was given a go-by, as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh welcomed his Pakistani counterpart to India, and sent him a bouquet after he landed here. External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh was at the airport to receive Aziz.

"Who could say some 20 years back that the Berlin wall would be a thing of the past? Let's hope and pray that we can set in motion a similar process in this sub-continent. I earnestly and sincerely will work to that end," Manmohan Singh said, reflecting the desire to move forward.

While New Delhi is clear that Shaukat Aziz is here with an invitation for the Saarc summit, it is bracing up to put its concerns across on the issue of the existence of terrorist camps in Pakistani territory. On Jammu and Kashmir, it will only be willing to discuss a solution that does not entail any re-drawing of boundaries.

Sources said that a middle-ground solution, which is expected to be discussed, could be greater autonomy to Kashmiris on both sides, and maintaining the status quo. But it will be a long haul. First, Islamabad will have to loosen its tight grip over the Northern Areas and the PoK. Secondly, any such proposal will have to be put through before the Indian Parliament before any substantive movement can take place.

For Aziz, it was a packed schedule. He had back-to-back meetings with Natwar Singh, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and leader of the opposition L.K. Advani. Aziz also met the Hurriyat leaders. However, New Delhi has made it clear that there is no scope for any tripartite dialogue on Jammu and Kashmir.

The two sides will also discuss the gas pipeline from Iran, which India is willing to discuss under the broader framework of economic co-operation. This means that Islamabad should consider MFN status for trade to India. It should also give security guarantee for the pipeline. Finally, it should liberalise trade with India.



Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz greets BJP president L.K. Advani in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Surprising candour in Hurriyat's approach

Arun Joshi
Jammu, November 23

THE ALL-PARTIES Hurriyat Conference spoke its mind with a surprising mix of straight-forwardness and diplomacy to Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, whom they met in Delhi tonight. The Hurriyat wanted to know its role and the amount of confidence Pakistan would invest in it while talking Kashmir with India.

What trickled out through the sources while the meeting appeared to be lengthening was that it appeared the two sides had agreed to take each other into greater confidence and avoid unilateralism in words and actions - implying Pakistan would not float trial balloons and the Hurriyat, too, would not rush with its half-baked reactions.

"Mutual confidence was the key", a source said. The Hurriyat sought to know its definite slot and role in resolving the Kashmir issue and politely warned against any unilateral move subordinating the Kashmiris will to the bilateral gains by Pakistan with India, sources who knew the pattern and content of the discussions told *Hindustan Times* over the phone.

The founder-chairman of the Hurriyat, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, had entered into the meeting room with a clear mind to know from Aziz about "our role" in Islamabad's scheme of things. He manifested the same when he said, "We're looking at a setting in which we'd like to find out our role". Pakistan's test would lie in taking the Hurriyat into confidence while dealing with and discussing Kashmir with India.

The Mirwaiz observed emphatically, sources said, in the resolution of the Kashmir crisis, the will of the people is supreme and should not be subordinated to any other consideration.

Syed Ali Shah Geelani chided Pak leaders for signalling confusion at times by floating proposals deviating from the plebiscite and implementation of the UN resolutions". The UN resolutions alone are the realistic, practical and acceptable solution to the festering Kashmir crisis. Patchworks won't do", his logic went on the familiar lines.

'Troops reduction not cosmetic'

Press Trust of India
Hyderabad, November 23

THE DE-INDUCTION of troops from Jammu and Kashmir is being done without any compromise on security, Army Chief N.C. Vij said on Tuesday.

"It is not cosmetic. We are sincerely trying to de-induct troops. We are withdrawing a part of the troops from the border state as per the government's decision", Vij — here to present the new colours of the Corps to 1 EME, Secunderabad — told reporters in an informal chat. It is a gesture of friendship to create confidence between the two neighbouring countries, he added.

When asked about the number of

troops being de-inducted from Jammu and Kashmir, Vij said: "Do not go into numbers. These have no value".

Referring to cross-border infiltration, Vij said: "The Indian Army has foiled eight attempts during the last one week in the border state. The efforts of infiltrators have not reduced, but our capabilities have gone up".

Notwithstanding the ongoing troop reduction in J&K, the Army will not vacate any of the strategic positions on the LoC or in the hinterland, an Army official said in Srinagar on Tuesday. The Army hasn't lowered its guard and the situation in the state will be reviewed from time to time, he added.

Vij said, "As per the announcement of

Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, troops reduction is being done sincerely in Jammu and Kashmir and the troops withdrawal is on."

Speaking to the reporters on Monday, after the inauguration of Wide Band Satellite Network between Srinagar-Udhampur and Leh, Gen Vij said that Army along with the Central government is monitoring the situation in the state and the decision can be modified if situation changes.

Without revealing that how many and from where troops would be de-inducted from the state, Gen. Vij said that the de-induction process has been started" keeping in view the overall security situation.

Army Chief drops dream to settle in J&K

HT Correspondent
Jammu, November 23

THE FIRST Chief of Army Staff from Jammu and Kashmir, General N.C. Vij, has said he wouldn't be able to settle in his homeland after retirement.

"We were planning a house in Jammu. The design was done and we were about to begin construction... but now plans have changed," he said.

Speaking to *Hindustan Times*, Gener-

al Vij said he was deeply attached to the Valley and would have loved to stay here, but he was not getting security clearance for constructing a house here due to terrorist threats.

At his first ever meeting with the media in Jammu on October 11 last year, Vij had said he would stay in Jammu after his retirement.

The General is due to retire in the next few months.

"I am not happy with the fact that I

won't be able to construct a house in my hometown, but then, that is what has to happen. I will come here often... to visit my parents and relatives, who are living at Naryanai Mohallah from ages. For me nothing will change," Vij said.

In September 2003, the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba had entrusted some terrorists operating in Poonch district with eliminating the Vijs, following which the government had beefed up security for the entire family.

Pervez pitches for Sonia

Tr 2/11 9/11/04
 'She can build consensus'



Atal Bihari Vajpayee with Shaukat Aziz in New Delhi on Tuesday. (AFP) ■ See Page 6

RASHEED KIDWAI

Islamabad, Nov. 23: Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf wants Congress president Sonia Gandhi to take a more "proactive role" in thrashing out a consensus in India on the Kashmir dispute.

Speaking to *The Telegraph* at his Rawalpindi Army House residence, Musharraf said: "Sonia Gandhi has a unique position in India. She is highly respected and holds an important position. If she takes a lead, I am confident that there will be a breakthrough in Indo-Pak ties."

The President added: "The good thing is that strictly speaking, she is not in the government. So she can work it out in a more informal way."

Musharraf made a few other suggestions, too. "She should try to involve every one — her allies, the Left and the Opposition BJP." Every leader reaches a "peak" in his/her political career, he said, adding that Sonia was currently at her "peak".

Sitting in the Sun Room surrounded by his wife Saheba and mother, the President confessed that he was a big "admirer" of Sonia. "It is really remarkable the way she declined to be Prime Minister of India. I really admire her for that."

Musharraf said he has invited Sonia and her two children — Rahul and Priyanka — to visit Pakistan. "I am very keen on meeting them. I am

EXCLUSIVE TO The Telegraph



She (Sonia Gandhi) is highly respected and holds an important position. If she takes a lead, I am confident that there will be a breakthrough in Indo-Pak ties

Pervez Musharraf

sure they can play a big role in further normalising Indo-Pak relations."

He said the Indian leadership must take a step forward to accelerate the peace process. "I know a dispute of this nature cannot be resolved quickly. But all that I am saying is that please make efforts. Start a debate within your country, explore options."

Wearing a grey suit with a lavender shirt, Musharraf said he saw little point in delaying the peace process. "I am ready to negotiate. Let us start talking, let us meet. I am ready. Let us work out a timetable. I am prepared to meet in four days' notice."

Musharraf said there was little point in blaming domestic compulsions for the delay.

"I know there are problems. There are fundamental-

ists, extremists here, and there are such sections in India, too. But then, what is leadership all about? Leadership often requires moving against the tide. Moreover, should we allow such fringe elements to derail the peace process?"

Musharraf said he could "sense" that the subcontinent was itching for a change.

"I have interacted with the Indian business community. They want to trade, exploit our markets and the same feeling exists among our entrepreneurs. But then, there cannot be commerce, cultural exchange in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and distrust," he said, harping on the theme of peaceful solution to the Kashmir dispute.

Referring to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Musharraf said he "fully un-

derstood" the Indian leader's reluctance to divide Kashmir on communal lines.

"But the idea of seven regions that I talked about on the October 25 *iftar* was based upon ethnic and regional lines and not on grounds of religion," he said.

The President said he found Singh to be sincere and committed to the peace process. "I instantly built a great liking for him. He is honest and means what he says."

Musharraf said his interaction with former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, too, gave clear indications that the BJP was keen on peace.

Asked if he had some more proposals for India, Musharraf said: "I would not reveal my cards now. I want to see how the Indian government reacts. All that I have been saying is that I am prepared to take a step forward but it must match from the other side too. Let there be a mid-way."

Berlin Wall warmth

Musharraf's comments came as Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz landed in India for a two-day visit. Aziz, who will meet the Indian Prime Minister tomorrow, got a welcome call from Singh.

"Who could say some 20 years ago that the Berlin Wall would be a thing of the past?" Singh told Aziz, adding that his "hope and prayer" is that "we can set in motion a similar process in this subcontinent. I earnestly and sincerely will work to that end".

India and Pakistan to set up joint study group

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov 23.— India and Pakistan today decided to set up a Joint Study Group (JSG) on economic cooperation between the two countries. The decision was announced after the commerce and industry minister, Mr Kamal Nath, met the Pakistan President, Gen Pervez Musharraf, in Islamabad

and apprised him of the need to enhance bilateral ties.

The JSG will examine the possibilities of further preferential trade arrangements between India and Pakistan on goods and services as well as investment. Pakistan's commerce minister, Mr Humayun Akhtar Khan, said at a joint press conference, according to an official communique here.

Mr Kamal Nath briefed the Pakistan president about his interaction with the Indo-Pak Chamber of Commerce in Islamabad and the high expectations Pakistan's businessmen had on the trade and economic front. While the potential of the two economies was enormous, the trade flows between the two nations continued to be very low, Mr Kamal Nath, adding

The study group would be headed by the commerce secretaries of India and Pakistan. It would have sub-groups to look at possibilities in various areas, the minister, who is in Pakistan in connection with the two-day fourth meeting of the Saarc commerce ministers said.

The JSG will hold its first meeting shortly to discuss a wide trade agenda, officials said.

logue."

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The JSG will hold its first meeting shortly to discuss a wide trade agenda, officials said.

24 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

SRINAGAR-MUZAFFARABAD BUS MAJOR PRIORITY

India hopeful of substantial talks

51-3
28/4

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov 22. — Despite all the strident rhetoric that has preceded the visit of the Pakistan Prime Minister Mr Shaukat Aziz to India tomorrow, the government is hopeful that “substantive” discussions on bilateral relations will be held.

New Delhi plans to stress on the early launch of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service and operationalisation of several other confidence-building measures already agreed upon. Mr Aziz, a distinguished economist like Dr Manmohan Singh, is also likely to pitch in for an early decision on the overland route of the Iran-India gas pipeline through Pakistan.

The issue was last discussed when Dr Singh met Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf in New York.

Mr Aziz, the first Pakistani Prime Minister to visit India in over a decade, will arrive at the head of a high-level delegation and hold wide-ranging discussions with the Indian delegation, to be led by Dr Singh. He is expected

to formally propose a formula for “resolution” of the Jammu and Kashmir issue, mooted last month by Gen. Musharraf.

While Dr Singh has repeatedly and categorically ruled out a “redrawing of borders”, the government is willing to “look at” any proposal on the issue, made formally.

Technically, Dr Aziz’s visit is not in a “bilateral context”, but as the outgoing chairman of Saarc, so issues related to decisions taken during the Islamabad summit in January would be reviewed, officials said. But the effort would also be to ensure that the bilateral peace process is taken forward.

An MEA spokesman said: “We have been always hopeful that all the interaction will improve bilateral relations. All our efforts have been in the direction of resolving our differences with Pakistan.”

During his two-day visit, Mr Aziz will meet the President, top political leaders, NDA chairman and leader of the Opposition and the petroleum and natural gas minister. He is also scheduled to meet various separatist groups leaders.

23 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

ISI pours fake currency into India

G. Ganapathy Subramaniam
NEW DELHI 21 NOVEMBER

THE guns might go silent in the Kashmir valley with the peace initiatives of Team Manmohan starting with troop reduction in the border state, but there seems to be no let-up in the cross-border onslaught on Indian economy. Even as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Pervez Musharraf are smoking the peace-pipe, Pakistan's ISI has launched a fresh offensive on the Indian economy by pumping in fake Indian currency notes.

The menace of fake currency notes, which was earlier routed through Nepal, had subsided for some time after the Indian authorities launched a massive crackdown and use of Rs 500

notes was banned in Kathmandu. The fresh wave of offensive has been launched by the ISI in the North East using Bangladesh as the base, according to highly-placed intelligence sources.

The resurfacing of fake currency notes was discussed by the Intelligence Bureau (IB) with top police officials of Tripura and other north-eastern states. Sleuths suspect that militant groups based in the North East are acting in connivance with the ISI through their bases in Bangladesh. In many cases, investigations revealed that the kingpins in the fake currency rackets were Bangladeshi nationals fronting for the ISI.

Following the crackdown in Nepal, where the Indian rupee is an accepted currency, the ISI has

shifted its fake currency operations to Bangladesh, Bhutan and Burma borders where militant groups of the North East operate. The issue has now been taken up with the Border Security Force (BSF). The collected evidence will also be used to convince the BSF's counterpart, the BDR, to take action against the kingpins, sources said.

During 2002-03 alone, Rs 20 crore in fake currency was seized from various parts of the country. The actual amount of fake currency in circulation is estimated to run into hundreds of crores. Apart from funding terrorism, the ISI is also looking at destabilisation of the Indian economy by flooding the country with fake notes, sources added.

The quality of the fake notes seized indicates that they could

not have been produced without the support of some government agencies. The needle of suspicion pointed at the ISI, which sleuths accused, is seeking to erode the credibility of the Indian currency. Fake notes are not uncommon in the case of top currencies, starting with the US dollar.

The difference in the case of the rupee, however, is that it is not convertible. Officially, the rupee is not a legal tender anywhere outside India, with the sole exception of Nepal. However, the rupee is illegally transacted in various places including Sri Lanka, some Gulf countries and Bangladesh. Tripura Police has informed IB about the fake currency menace in the North East. The apprehensions are serious since border trade with Burma and Bangladesh is being actively promoted, sources said.

SINGH DOWNPLAYS MUSHARRAF'S FEARS

5/11
22/11

Can't choose neighbours: PM

Jan. 2004

Ashe Ramchandran in Imphal

Nov. 21. — Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh remained non-committal as he dispelled fears raised by Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf and spoke of the need to strengthen relationships with all neighbours.

"We are very serious to ensure that composite dialogue (with Pakistan) progresses, and progresses well," Dr Singh told reporters at the end of a two-day visit to Manipur. Dr Singh was reacting to Gen. Musharraf's outburst yesterday that Pakistan would not give up its "maximalist position" on plebiscite and implementation of UN resolutions unless New Delhi met it half-way.

Dr Singh said he looked forward to Gen. Musharraf's visit to Delhi on 23 November. When pressed for comments on Gen. Musharraf's statement the India was "sending bad vibes" and not showing flexibility, the Prime Minister quipped: "On the basis of stray words one cannot say there is no flexibility."

On the presence of insurgent camps in Bangladesh, Dr Singh said the matter had been raised at the highest levels in that country. He had even spoken to the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia. "It is still my hope that the Bangladesh government will respond constructively to our concerns."

"We can choose friends but not neighbours. While geography has put us together

New deal for N-E



GUWAHATI/ IMPHAL, Nov. 21.

— Dr Manmohan Singh today painted a rosy future for the North-East saying that it would be the springboard from which the country will launch an economic integration with its eastern neighbours. He appealed to the youth in the region to

not resort to violence and invited insurgents for talks. He promised a New Deal for Assam to tackle the scourge of floods. — SNS & PTI

Details on page 4

as neighbours, history wants us to be good neighbours," he mused. Every effort would be made to strengthen good relationships with Bangladesh as also with Pakistan, Nepal and Myanmar, he said.

External affairs minister Mr Natwar Singh today counselled patience to Pakistan saying results of efforts to solve long-festering bilateral problems cannot be expected in a day or two, PTI adds from New Delhi. He said the problems between India and Pakistan were old and results could not be expected in a day or two. The minister reached Kolkata tonight. He will leave for Guwahati tomorrow morning.

Meanwhile, Pakistan today said it has added 81 items to a list of goods that can be imported from India with a reduced tariff.

প্রস্তাব খারিজ দিল্লির ওপর রুষ্ঠ মুশারফ

ইসলামাবাদ, ২০ নভেম্বর (পি টি আই)
— জম্মু-কাশ্মীরে নিয়ন্ত্রণ রেখা বরাবর
৭টি অঞ্চল ফৌজমুক্ত করে সীমান্ত
পুনর্বিন্যাসের প্রস্তাব দিয়েছিলেন
পাকিস্তানের প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ
মুশারফ। প্রস্তাব ছিল এই ৭টি অঞ্চলকে
স্বশাসন দেওয়ার। ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রী
মনমোহন সিং সেই প্রস্তাব খারিজ করে
দিয়েছেন। সম্প্রতি কাশ্মীর সফরে গিয়ে
মনমোহন বলেন, কাশ্মীর ভারতের
অবিচ্ছেদ্য অঙ্গ। মনমোহনের এই মন্তব্যে
বেজায় চটেছেন মুশারফ। বলেন, এইসব
পুরনো কথাবার্তা ছাড়ার সময় হয়েছে।
না হলে পাকিস্তানও তার পুরনো অবস্থান
আঁকড়ে থাকবে। কাশ্মীর সমস্যা
সমাধানের পথ কোনওদিনই পাওয়া
যাবে না। মুশারফ বলেন, সমাধানের পথে
দিল্লি এগোলে ইসলামাবাদও এগোবে।
সার্কভুক্ত দেশগুলির সাংবাদিকদের
সম্মেলনে আজ একথা বলেন মুশারফ।
তিনি 'ভারত-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের'
সাংবাদিকদের বিশেষভাবে স্বাগত
জ্ঞান। বলেন, 'আমরা ওই অঞ্চলটিকে
এই নামে চিহ্নিত করে থাকি।' সেই
সাংবাদিকদের লক্ষ্য করেই মুশারফ
বলেন, 'কাশ্মীরিদের বাদ দিয়ে কাশ্মীর
সমস্যার সমাধান হবে না। আজ হোক বা
কাল হোক কাশ্মীরিদের নিয়ে আলোচনায়
বসতে হবে। তবে জানি না সেটা কবে
হবে।' জম্মু-কাশ্মীর থেকে দিল্লির সেনা
কমান্ডার সিদ্ধান্তকে মুশারফ 'লোক
দেখানো ব্যাপার' বলেছেন। বলেন, যে
কোনও দিনই সেনা আবার বাড়ানো হতে
পারে। এটা দিল্লির কৌশল, নীতি নয়।
প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংয়ের নাম না করে
প্রেসিডেন্ট মুশারফ ভারত সরকার
সম্পর্কে আজ ছিলেন বেশ আক্রমণাত্মক।
এক সময় মন্তব্য করেন, ভারত সত্যিই
শান্তি চায়, চায় কিনা সে বিষয়ে
পাকিস্তানের মানুষ ও সরকারের সন্দেহ
বাড়ছে। তবে মুশারফের বিশ্বাস, সুড়ঙ্গের
শেষে আলোর দেখা মিলবেই।
পাকিস্তানের প্রধানমন্ত্রী শওকত আজিজ
ও ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিং
শিগগিরই বৈঠকে বসবেন। সেখানে
আলোচনার অগ্রগতি ঘটতে পারে।

21 NOV 2004 AAJKAL

Compromise, or else: Musharraf

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LAHORE, Nov. 20. — Visibly unhappy at India's assertion that it would not accept redrawing of the borders in J&K, President Pervez Musharraf today accused New Delhi of adopting a "patronising attitude" but left room for carrying forward the dialogue process.

The General was back in his tough-talking mood declaring at the outset at a Saarc media conference here that he did not believe in mincing words before voicing his disappointment at the statements made by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh during his recent visit to J&K that New Delhi was willing to talk to Pakistan on a solution to Kashmir that does not involve redrawing of the borders. He, however, refrained from mentioning Dr Singh by name.

Opening a two-day conference organised by the South Asian

'COSMETIC CUT'



LAHORE, Nov. 20. — Gen. Pervez Musharraf today dismissed the Indian government's decision on the reduction of troops in J&K as a "cosmetic change" and not a strategic move that could help solve the Kashmir issue. — PTI

Free Media Association (Safma), the President made it clear that Pakistan would not give up its "maximalist position" asking for a plebiscite and implementation of the UN resolution on Kashmir unless New Delhi met it half-way.

Clearly angered by New Delhi's offer to consider his proposal for demilitarisation of seven regions of J&K on both sides of the LoC if formally presented, Gen. Musharraf said:

"It is not a song one has to listen to. We expect to be talking. We expect answers."

Leaving open the door for reconciliation, the General hoped that these issues would be sorted out when Prime Ministers Mr Shaukat Aziz and Dr Manmohan Singh meet in Delhi next week. Gen. Musharraf hoped that his concerns over "bad vibes" from New Delhi were his "suspicions only" and that the "light at the end of the tunnel remained".

In his address to the conference, Gen. Musharraf dismissed the Indian view of him as a "unifocal man" but said Kashmir remained the core issue.

Meanwhile, Pakistan today rejected Indian objections to a proposed \$1.3 billion US arms sale to Islamabad, saying its "modest" defence requirements should not irk New Delhi.

■ Photograph, another report on p. 10

21 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

Natwar clears air over K-issue

Says Pak options will be heard only if put formally

Asia News International
New Delhi, November 19

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister K. Natwar Singh on Friday said India would be ready to listen to all proposals put forward by Pakistan on resolving the Kashmir dispute, if laid down formally.

Speaking at a conference organised by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) here, Singh said New Delhi had only seen what had been said by Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf at an Iftar party, and was awaiting a formal presentation of the same through political or diplomatic channels.

"What we saw was only what President Musharraf (General Pervez Musharraf) mentioned it at an Iftar party. We have no formal communication from the Pakistan side on what Musharraf had in mind. The Prime Minister of Pakistan is coming here on the 23rd. Let's see what he brings", Singh said.

"Yesterday, the Prime Minister gave his statements in Kashmir making clear our stance on the issue", said Singh, referring to New Delhi's firm resolve not to redraw the boundaries in Kashmir, at the same time agreeing to a phased withdrawal of the security forces from Kashmir Valley. Army officials said New Delhi is planning to pull out about 20,000 troops out of an estimated 500,000.

Meanwhile, comparing Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to J&K with the developments in the BJP (the Uma Bharati episode),

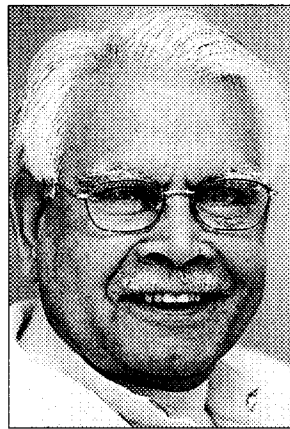
the Congress on Friday said the striking contrast was that of sublime and ridiculous, constructive and comic and between sincere and hypocritical.

Further commenting on the Kashmir scene in the light of Singh's visit, party spokesman Abhishek Singhvi said that, in comparison with the NDA dispensation's flip-flop on Kashmir, the PM's stand was positive — which also showed a way forward. He hailed the "big economic" package offered by him for the state, which he felt will help in the overall development of J&K.

Singhvi described Singh's stand as a "vigorous and forthright assertion of India's uncompromising stand on territorial integrity". His open offer for an unconditional dialogue with those shunning violence was also noteworthy since it would pave the way for talks with all sections of the Kashmiri society.

Composite dialogue: In Islamabad, Shaukat Aziz today vowed to pursue dialogue process with India to find solution to all issues, including Kashmir. "Pakistan will take forward the current process of composite dialogue with India to find a lasting and just solution to the dispute," he said.

He said Pakistan desired a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue in line with the aspirations of Kashmiris. "Pakistan's foreign policy is aimed at projecting the country's interest, peace in the region and internal



Natwar Singh & Pervez Musharraf

INDIA SAFER THAN MOST

SECURITY EXPERTS have predicted that attacks by militants against westerners may increase in large parts of the world, including Asia, next year.

While many countries on the Control Risk map are regarded as "high-risk" areas and to be avoided by all, among "more popular destinations" parts of India, Pakistan, Nepal are also included in the category of the second "high risk" areas. Cross-border terrorism in Kashmir, said a source, has made India unsafe. Otherwise India is perfectly safe and this is evident from the increasing number of tourists visiting India.

The Risk Map for 2005

published by the Control Risks Group stresses that large areas of the globe have become too dangerous for westerners to visit or do business.

West Asia, large parts of the Islamic world and parts of Africa and Asia including India are, the report says, not safe. The US is considered safer than it was before 9/11.

Jack Stratton, research director of the group, said there could be more "vigilante-style terrorism" by extremists who have been behind a wave of attacks, like the killings of expatriates in Saudi Arabia and the murder of a filmmaker in Amsterdam.

HTC, London

stability", Aziz said, adding that Pakistan was playing a key role in the stability and peace in the region.

In an address that touched a variety of domestic and international issues, Aziz said Pakistan would pay special

attention to its relations with major powers — the European Union, Asean, Saarc, ECO, GCC and OIC countries. He expressed confidence that the historically friendly ties between Pakistan and China would continue to grow.

India not flexible, charges Gen

Islamabad: President Pervez Musharraf on Thursday said Pakistan was "not encouraged" by the signals coming from India over their joint pledge to try and resolve their dispute over Kashmir.

"The vibes that are coming do not encourage the process of normalisation," Musharraf said in an interview, just days ahead of the peace talks between the Prime Ministers of the two countries in New Delhi. Accusing India of failing to show flexibility, he said, "Certainly, the vibes should be much better than this...that we are moving, that we want to. There ought to be a desire to move forward towards peace. But the vibes we are getting do not encourage peace."

Musharraf's comments came in response to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's assertion on Wednesday that India's boundary would not be redrawn. Stating that he saw light at the end of the tunnel, Musharraf had, at an iftar party on October 25, suggested identifying seven

regions on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC), demilitarising them and changing their status through independence or joint control or under UN mandate. His suggestions came after talks with Manmohan in New York in September on taking the peace dialogue forward.



Remarking that violence would stop only if the peace process was taken ahead, he claimed, "Whoever is behind the violence and the freedom struggle, the people who are fighting for freedom will be encouraged and it will automatically reduce. Nothing is going from Pakistan. Everything is indigenous, it's happening inside Kashmir."

Dismissing the troop pull-out from Kashmir as a superficial step, he said, "These are good optics, but they do not strike at the strategic issue of moving forward on a resolution. If out of 600,000 or 700,000 troops, 40,000 troops are removed, we welcome it. It's a step forward. However, it is a tactical step forward." PTI

W
/ 'POLITICAL SPACE WITHIN STATED POSITIONS'

SF-1
19/11
Dual efforts in
SF-1 19/11
peace push: Pak

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 18. — Pakistan today said it was making efforts along with India to find a solution for Kashmir within the stated positions of both countries and called for substantial reduction of troops in J&K to take the dialogue process forward.

Asked to comment on Dr Manmohan Singh's assertions that any redrawing of maps is not acceptable to India, Pakistan foreign office spokesman Mr Masood Khan told reporters here that both the countries are currently looking for political space within their stated positions. "We know what the stated positions of Pakistan and India are... Right now we are looking for some political space, some areas where we can make progress. While these statements are made reiterating the stated positions, efforts are being made to bring about a breakthrough to explore new avenues and options available to leaderships of both the countries within the broad parameters of their stated policy positions."

Elaborating on Pakistan's stand, Mr Khan said the fact that India has agreed to discuss Kashmir itself amounted that it is considered as a contentious issue between both sides. "This is not a closed question... Kashmir was discussed and fig-

'Talks possible within limits'



Dr Singh at a rally in Jammu on Thursday. — PTI

JAMMU, Nov. 18. — The Prime Minister today expressed his belief that "purposeful and meaningful negotiations" with Pakistan are possible within the limits set by him that redrawing of borders and "second partition" of the country are not feasible. "Subject to this, there is wide scope for dialogue and I hope people will take advantage of it," Dr Manmohan Singh told reporters here wrapping up his two-day visit to J&K. He added that "it's not fair" on the Hurriyat's part to insist that their leaders should be allowed to visit Pakistan before they talk to the Centre. "I do not accept any pre-condition on the part of anyone." — SNS

ured in the bilateral meetings. President Pervez Musharraf and Dr Singh in their recent meet-

ing discussed Kashmir and decided to explore all possible options for peaceful negotiated settlement, which means that we have to move beyond our stated positions."

He added that the Prime Minister's statement of not redrawing maps do not negate the joint statement issued by Dr Singh and Gen. Musharraf after their meeting in New York recently. "We remain hopeful and optimistic. Ultimately we will not be talking about redrawing of boundaries between India and Pakistan but about deciding about a disputed state called J&K."

Mr Khan said there must be reciprocity to gestures from Pakistan. "There cannot be any unilateral concession. If Pakistan shows flexibility, there must be matching response from the other side so as to make any progress."

On the reduction of Indian troops in Kashmir as a good beginning, he said: "We are neither optimistic nor pessimistic. What we said is based on realism. Looking at past behaviour of two actors of Indo-Pak dialogue, we have noticed some momentum. That is what we have commended."

On Dr Singh's condition that cross-border terrorism should end, he said it's not a "real or live issue". "The live issue is protection of human rights."

Another report on page 4

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THE STATESMAN

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 11-16
 P. Singh
 Pak

Both countries must show flexibility on J&K issue: Pak

Islamabad: Choosing not to make an issue of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's statement in Srinagar that Jammu and Kashmir is an inalienable part of India, Pakistan on Thursday said the current efforts between the two countries were intended to explore "new avenues" for solutions to problems.

Foreign office spokesman Masood Khan told reporters that both the countries should go beyond the stated positions for resolving problems between them.

"I think we know the stated positions of Pakistan and India. Right now we are looking for some political space, some area where we can make progress. While the statements being made are traditional positions, efforts are also being made to explore new avenues to look for options," Khan said. He was replying to a volley of questions on Singh's visit to Jammu and Kashmir and his remarks at a public meeting in Srinagar that J&K is an inalienable part of India and that such a position closed all scope for negotiations between the two countries.

"All possible options for a negotiated settlement should be looked at. We have to move beyond stated positions and we have to look at various options

to evolve a solution acceptable to India and Pakistan and the people of Kashmir," he said.

Meanwhile, reacting to the Indian prime minister's statement, Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf has said that the Line of Control (LoC) is part of the Kashmir "problem and could never be a solution."

At a meeting here on Wednesday night with PoK leaders, where Singh's visit to Srinagar is understood to have come up for review, Musharraf said "all sides" have to demonstrate bilateral and mutual flexibility in order to take the peace process forward. He expressed Pakistan's readiness to show flexibility if it was reciprocated by India.



P Musharraf

The dinner meeting was attended among others by Pakistan prime minister Shaukat Aziz (who is paying a two-day visit to India next week), PoK president Muhammad Anwar Khan and PoK prime minister Sikandar Hayat Khan.

An official statement issued after the meeting did not make any reference to Singh's visit to Srinagar but quoted Musharraf as saying that LoC was a "part of the problem and could never be the solution."

Musharraf said there was a need for demonstration of flexibility by all sides, meaning Pakistan, India and the people of Kashmir.

He said flexibility and sincerity cannot be one-sided but has to be displayed "bilaterally and mutually if we are to move forward and Pakistan is prepared to do so if there is reciprocity from the Indian side."

Musharraf said Pakistan would continue to pursue a solution acceptable to the Kashmiri people. He also informed the Kashmiri leaders of his meetings with the Indian leadership, which he termed as "positive" and said he felt that they were interested in arriving at a solution on the J&K issue which was the "root cause of strained relations between India and Pakistan."

Reiterating that no solution of Kashmir was possible without taking into account the views and aspirations of the people of Kashmir, Musharraf said his remarks outlining options to resolve Kashmir issue made at an iftar dinner on October 25, was aimed at stirring a debate in the media.

He said he had asked the media to debate the options on Kashmir and added it was imperative to understand that Pakistan had not stepped back from its principled position on the issue. PTI

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

খারিজ করবে ভারত

শুভ আহম্মেদ

পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী শওকত আজিজ ২৩ নভেম্বর দিল্লি এসে প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের দেওয়া কাশ্মীর-সূত্র সরকারি ভাবে জানালে ভারত তা খারিজ করে দেবে। সম্প্রতি প্রকাশ্যে কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানে একটি প্রস্তাব দেন মুশারফ। সেই প্রস্তাব হল, কাশ্মীরকে কয়েকটি ভাগে ভাগ করা হোক। তার মধ্যে লাদাখ ও জম্মু ভারত নিক। পাক-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীর ইসলামাবাদের দখলে থাকুক। আর কাশ্মীর উপত্যকা কোন পক্ষে যাবে, তা সেখানকার মানুষ ভোটাভুটির মাধ্যমে স্থির করুন। কেন্দ্রের বক্তব্য, এটা আদৌ নতুন কোনও প্রস্তাব নয়। ১৯৫০ সালে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের প্রতিনিধি অস্ট্রেলীয় বিচারক ও এন ডিকসন এই একই রকম প্রস্তাব দিয়েছিলেন। মুশারফ তাকেই ফের জিইয়ে তুলেছেন। মনমোহন সরকার বলছে, পাকিস্তান যদি নতুন কোনও প্রস্তাব দেয়, তবে তা বিবেচনা করা হবে।

১৩ নভেম্বর ২০০৪

ANADARAZI BATEIKA

INDIA AND PAKISTAN

Détente The Flavour Of The Moment

By SWAGATO GANGULY

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16/11
Soon after Prime Minister Vajpayee went to Islamabad to sign a bilateral accord in January this year, I had predicted in these columns a turnaround in relations between India and Pakistan. That turnaround is on course. For such a historically embattled relationship improvement in relations may be slow, even glacial. But signs of a détente in the making are visible.

First, the ceasefire on the border has held for a year now, which is unprecedented since the start of the Kashmir insurgency. Cross-border infiltration has not completely halted yet, but according to the estimates of a senior BSF officer, 370 militants are estimated to have crossed over so far this year, as opposed to 1,200 in the same time last year. And of course, the two sides are talking.

Mutual dependencies

Cricket matches between India and Pakistan used to be war by other means, to paraphrase Clausewitz. But India played a series in Pakistan amidst unprecedented bonhomie soon after the signing of the January accords, which amounted to détente by other means.

General Musharraf has now junked the orthodox Pakistani position on Jammu and Kashmir: holding a plebiscite under UN supervision. He has come up with a new and different proposal: "divide Kashmir into seven different regions, demilitarise them and change their status."

Let us leave aside for the moment that this proposal will not fly. Given the current state of India-Pakistan relations, it is doubtful that any proposal will fly. And Musharraf's proposal was made off-hand, at an *iftar* party, rather than through the formal mechanism established for this purpose. "Changing status," when fleshed out, comes to either independence or a joint Indo-Pakistani condominium. One doesn't see how a tiny, landlocked fragment of Jammu and Kashmir can be meaningfully independent. As for the condominium option, Delhi has enough problems with Jammu and Kashmir nominally under its full control, thanks mostly to the low-intensity war that Islamabad launched against it under cover of "plausible deniability." Now that the cover has been blown

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and denial wholly implausible, and with the precedent of Kargil incursions succeeding the Lahore accord behind it, why should Delhi trust Islamabad getting a footing inside the Indian part of Kashmir?

This really gets down to the nub of the problem between the two countries: no solution can work unless there is sufficient trust between the two countries. The first task, therefore, is to



establish that trust. And the India-China model of normalisation of ties looks the best way of going forward — boost movement of people and goods till the distrust has faded and mutual dependencies are created. Romance doesn't happen in just any ambience, you need to find the right setting and provide the proper atmospherics for it.

Many in Islamabad insist that Kashmir needs to be settled first, which makes it incumbent on Musharraf to come up with one "solution" after another. The reality, however, is that current Indian and Pakistani positions on Kashmir are so far apart that they will not be bridged in a day.

Disintegrating axis

In that context Musharraf's proposal must be seen as an incremental move aimed at unfreezing rigid Pakistani positions on Kashmir. And Delhi's response, withdrawing some troops from Kashmir now that infiltration has come down, is calibrated just right.

Within Pakistani politics Mus-

harraf's room for manoeuvre is shrinking. He has alienated the democratic parties through his coup and persecution of their leaders. But the establishment of Afghanistan as a democracy will be a shot in the arm for democratic forces in Pakistan, just as its erstwhile Talibanisation had aided Pakistan's Islamists. Musharraf has followed the logic of Pakistan's traditional military-mullah axis — the true "axis of

evil" from India's point of view — by fostering the MMA, but they are angry at him now for reneging on his pledge to take off his uniform in December. It is not that MMA politicians are democrats or anti-militarists to a fault. Their real grudge against Musharraf is that he sided with the Americans against the Al Qaeda and Taliban.

Najam Sethi, editor of Lahore's *Friday Times* and shrewd observer of Pakistani politics, has predicted in a recent editorial piece that the military-mullah axis will come apart soon. Since the military cannot go it absolutely alone it will have to ally itself with the mainstream against the fundamentalists. A military-mainstream rapprochement augurs well for peace with India, as Pakistan's civilian politicians are not as invested in Kashmir as are the military and the mullahs.

Jehad is effectively indivisible; one cannot parcel it out into little packages, use some as instruments of high policy while throwing away the others. The Lashkar-e-Toiba's role in the Kashmir *jehad* is well known, but one of its websites has called for

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sending holy warriors to Iraq, opining "*jehad* against America has now become mandatory." Militants belonging to it have been captured in Iraq. Musharraf may choose to mount the *jehadi* tiger, if he so wishes. But he cannot hope to ride the *jehadi* tiger and the American elephant simultaneously. To careful observers, it will be quite apparent which mount he has chosen. Sethi points out that Pakistan's new prime minister Shaukat Aziz has spoken of "mutual dependencies" with India, which tallies with Delhi's idiom but is certainly novel in Pakistani politics.

Peace dividend

A sceptic might interject that the Pakistani military is too invested in hostility with India, as its perks and prestige in Pakistani society flow from it. This has some validity, but the same argument can be up-ended. The Pakistani military is heavily involved in politics and business. The best farmlands, the largest industrial groups, the seniormost positions in the bureaucracy, even senior administrative posts in the universities belong to its personnel. As businessmen, they must be casting an envious eye on the volumes of outsourced business India has been able to garner.

Huge profits are to be made if the Iran pipeline deal comes through. Any observer worth his salt is ebullient about the immense benefits of South Asia wide economic co-operation. In terms of their business interests, the Pakistani military would be among the biggest gainers from a peace dividend. A war with India, on the other hand, carries unforeseen risks, as there is a good chance that Pakistan's fat cat military would be thrashed by numerically superior Indian forces. Such a defeat would consign its present leadership to oblivion.

There is a good chance that 2005 will be even better for India-Pakistan relations than 2004, with one rider. President Bush may decide to pump in large volumes of sophisticated weapons to Pakistan as a "reward" for compliance with its war on terror. That would skew the logic spelt out above, as the military may decide its best interests do no lie in peace with India. Perhaps, contrary to common-sense, it would be better if they don't catch up with Osama bin Laden anytime soon.

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THE STATESMAN

Natwar in reality check

PRANAY SHARMA

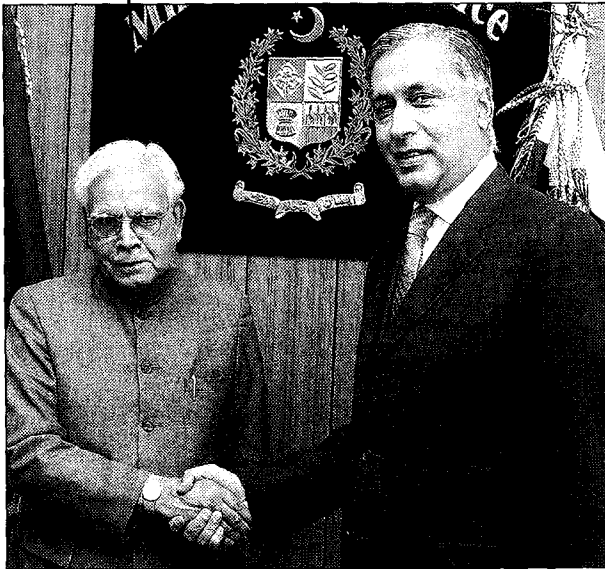
New Delhi, Nov. 15: Foreign minister K. Natwar Singh today said "no miracles" should be expected from the talks on Kashmir between Shaukat Aziz and the Indian leadership when the Pakistan Prime Minister arrives here next week.

"This problem has been continuing for the last 57 years. There could be no miracle. We are trying our best," Singh, who was at a function to flag off the Asean car rally that started from Delhi, told reporters this afternoon.

Aziz is scheduled to arrive on November 23 for talks with Indian leaders. Though ostensibly he is coming here as the outgoing chairman of Saarc, there is little doubt that the focus of his discussions will be the ongoing dialogue between the two sides and how to take it forward.

Singh said Pakistan has not sent any formal proposal on the Kashmir trial balloon that President Pervez Musharraf floated last month but added that Aziz could put these suggestions formally before the Indian leadership during the talks.

Musharraf had suggested



Natwar with Aziz during his Pakistan visit in July. (Reuters)

that Jammu and Kashmir (including the part in Pakistan's possession) be carved into seven regions and demilitarised as a prelude to letting them choose their rulers.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's recent announcement on reducing troops in Kashmir and the foreign minister's remarks last week that India would consider Musharraf's proposals once they are

formally put forward have gone down well in Pakistan. But there are sections in the Indian establishment which feel the hype across the border is aimed at raising expectations in South Asia and outside of a possible breakthrough on Kashmir.

Singh's attempt to caution the domestic audience as well as international leaders with his comment that no miracles

should be expected is being seen in this backdrop. The foreign minister said India has come up with several proposals for improving ties with Pakistan. "...They (Pakistan) have responded to some of them and hopefully their Prime Minister will come and discuss most of them during his visit," he added.

The minister was guarded in his response when asked if he was optimistic about the Pakistan Prime Minister's visit.

"I don't look at it in those terms. We are looking in terms of realism and we are giving it our best shot," he said.

Indian officials have made it clear that though Delhi took a unilateral decision to reduce troops in Kashmir, it would continue to monitor the security situation in the state and along the Line of Control. According to South Block, the onus is now on Pakistan to respond on the issue of terrorism.

Officials pointed out that though infiltration across the LoC has gone down, there is nothing to suggest that Islamabad is taking steps to dismantle the terror apparatus on its side of the border.

Kashmir formula in Aziz travel kit

Pervez plan on way to Delhi

OUR BUREAU

Nov. 14: Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz will formally put forward General Pervez Musharraf's proposals for Kashmir when he arrives here later this month.

Some time ago, Musharraf floated a trial balloon by suggesting Jammu and Kashmir (including the part in Pakistan's possession) be carved into seven regions and demilitarised as a prelude to letting them choose their rulers.

"Our Prime Minister is going to India where it will be discussed," foreign minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri told a radio station.

Yesterday, his Indian counterpart, K. Natwar Singh, had said India would "certainly look into" such a proposal if it were to be made formally.

Before Aziz's visit — he will be in Delhi on November 23 — moves are being made on either side that suggest a quickening of activity. Last week, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced troops reduction in the state.

In Hyderabad today, Singh said the decision was another experiment to reduce tension and promote confidence among the people.

"We have taken some risks in the past and this (troop cut) is not an unacceptable



Shaukat Aziz

risk," he added.

Aziz is coming to Delhi as the outgoing chairperson of Saarc to invite India to the regional association's summit in Dhaka.

Kasuri said: "Our President has already started a debate and there is no doubt that when we go for the next meeting we will definitely take this proposal along."

Even if the proposal is not discussed during Aziz's visit, there will be several occasions in the near future when the two sides will come together.

Kasuri said he had invited Natwar Singh to Pakistan and "then we are meeting in Dhaka and our foreign secretaries are also due to meet.... So opportunities are enough but the need is for clear and good intentions".

India had initially reacted

coldly to Musharraf's formula. But, yesterday, when asked for his reaction to the proposals, Natwar Singh said India would consider them if they were made formally and not through the media.

Natwar Singh's remarks were welcomed by Pakistan as reflecting a "positive and constructive approach towards resolution of the Kashmir issue".

Today, he reminded Pakistan about India's concern over cross-border terrorism.

"We are hopeful that President Musharraf will stand by the commitment he made on January 6, 2004. We hope that cross-border activity will cease and terrorist movement will stop," Singh said.

In a joint statement with then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Musharraf had given an assurance that Pakistan would not allow territory under its control to be used for terrorist activities.

Before Aziz lands in Delhi, Manmohan Singh is travelling to Kashmir this week.

"It is more or less a visit aimed at giving a healing touch to people who had suffered tremendously during last few years.... I want to reach out to the hearts and minds of the people," he said.

"We want to put an end to this chapter of violence in Kashmir and that is my goal."

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অনুপ্রবেশ কামায় সেনা হ্রাসের 'পরীক্ষা'

হায়দরাবাদ, ১৪ নভেম্বর: কাশ্মীর সমস্যা মেটাতে তৃতীয় পক্ষের হস্তক্ষেপের সম্ভাবনা আরও এক বার নাকচ করে দিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। এ দিন হায়দরাবাদে তিনি বলেন, “কাশ্মীর-সহ বিবাদমান সব বিষয় মেটাতে কার্যকরী ও দু'পক্ষের কাছেই গ্রহণযোগ্য সমাধানসূত্র খুঁজে বার করতে হবে।” কাশ্মীরে সেনা কমানোর সিদ্ধান্তের সমর্থনে মনমোহন বলেন, “অনুপ্রবেশ কামাটা একটা বড় কারণ। নিরাপত্তার ক্ষেত্রেও যথেষ্ট উন্নতি হয়েছে। সেনা কমিয়ে আমরা একটা পরীক্ষা করব। তাতে ঝুঁকি আছে, তবে সেটা মেনে নেওয়া যায়। যদিও পরিস্থিতির উপরে আমরা সব সময় নজর রাখব।”

এ দিকে, নয়াদিল্লি থেকে স্টাফ রিপোর্টার জানাচ্ছেন, পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক স্বাভাবিক করার ক্ষেত্রে ভারত যে সীমান্তপার সন্ত্রাসকেই প্রধান বিষয় বলে মনে করে, তা আজ আবার স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ। কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ প্রকাশ্যে যে প্রস্তাব দিয়েছেন তা সরকারি ভাবে পাঠানো হলে বিবেচনা করে দেখার ইঙ্গিত কালই দেন নটবর। তার ফায়দা তুলতে পাকিস্তান সক্রিয় হওয়ার পরেই তিনি আজ বুঝিয়ে দিলেন, সন্ত্রাসের সমস্যা না-মেটা পর্যন্ত খুব বেশি অগ্রগতির সম্ভাবনা কম।

মুশারফ সম্প্রতি এক ইফতার পাটিতে কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানে কিছু প্রস্তাব দিয়েছিলেন। এর মধ্যে ছিল

কাশ্মীরের কোনও একটি এলাকাকে চিহ্নিত করে সেটিকে সম্পূর্ণ সেনামুক্ত করা এবং সমগ্র কাশ্মীরকে পাঁচটি ভাগে ভাগ করে প্রতিটি অঞ্চল নিয়ে আলাদা ভাবে ভাবনাচিন্তা করা। এই পাঁচটি অঞ্চলের মধ্যে পাক-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের গিলগিট অঞ্চলও ছিল। এর পরে হেগ-এ ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের বৈঠকে যোগ দিতে গিয়ে মনমোহন জানিয়ে দেন, ভারত একটি সার্বভৌম দেশ এবং দেশের কোনও অঞ্চল থেকে ভারতীয় সেনা সরিয়ে নেওয়ার প্রস্তাব তিনি বিন্দুমাত্র আমল দিতে রাজি নন। কিন্তু কাল মুশারফের বক্তব্য সম্পর্কে প্রশ্নের জবাব দিতে গিয়ে নটবর সিংহ বলেন, “সংবাদমাধ্যমের মাধ্যমে কোনও আলোচনা হয় না। পাকিস্তানের

তরফ থেকে সরকারি প্রস্তাব এলে তবে তা নিয়ে মতামত দেওয়া হবে।” তাঁর এই বক্তব্যকে স্বাগত জানিয়েছে হরিয়ত কনফারেন্স। হরিয়ত চেয়ারম্যান মিরওয়াইজ উমর ফারুক বলেছেন, কাশ্মীর সমস্যার স্থায়ী সমাধান খুঁজতে কেন্দ্র আরও নমনীয় হবে বলে তাঁরা আশা করেন।

নটবরের বক্তব্যের ব্যাখ্যায় কূটনীতিক মহল বলছে যে, এর অর্থ আসলে ওই প্রস্তাবগুলো সম্পর্কে ভারতের দরজা খুলে রাখা। পরিবর্তিত পরিস্থিতির সুযোগ নিতে আজ চেষ্টার ক্রটি করেনি পাকিস্তান সরকার। পাক বিদেশমন্ত্রী খুরসিদ মেহমুদ কাসুরি আজ এক সাক্ষাৎকারে বলেছেন, “আমাদের প্রধানমন্ত্রী যখন (২৩

নভেম্বর) নয়াদিল্লি যাবেন, তখন এ নিয়ে আলোচনা হবে।” নটবরের বক্তব্যকে স্বাগত জানিয়ে তিনি এ-ও বলেছেন যে, মুশারফ ইতিমধ্যেই বিষয়টি নিয়ে বিতর্কের পথ খুলে দিয়েছেন। “এর পর নিঃসন্দেহে এই প্রস্তাব নিয়ে আমরা আলোচনা করব।” এই মন্তব্য করে তিনি বলেন, এখন প্রয়োজন স্পষ্ট ভাবনা ও সদিচ্ছারা।

এ ভাবে পাকিস্তান যে ভারতকে নিজস্ব পছন্দের আবেতে টেনে আনতে চাইছে তা বুঝেই আজ আবার মুখ খুলেছেন নটবর। দ্বিতীয় আন্তর্জাতিক আইন সম্মেলন চলাকালে সাংবাদিকদের তিনি বলেন, “গত ৬ জানুয়ারি পারভেজ মুশারফ যে প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছিলেন তা তিনি পালন করবেন বলে আমরা আশাবাদী। সীমান্তের ও-পারে (সন্ত্রাসবাদী) তৎপরতা বন্ধ হবে বলেও আশা।”

পাকিস্তানের প্রধানমন্ত্রীর শওকত আজিজ আগামী ২৩ তারিখ ভারতে আসছেন। তাঁর সফরের সময় থেকেই ফের এক দফা আলোচনা শুরু হবে।

শ্রীনগরের খবর, হরিয়ত কনফারেন্সের কটরপন্থী নেতা সৈয়দ আলি শাহ গিলানিকে আজ সকালে বারামুলায় আটক করা হয়। সোপোরে একটি ঈদ সমাবেশে বক্তৃতা দিতে যাচ্ছিলেন তিনি। ওই সমাবেশের ফলে আইনশৃঙ্খলা বিঘ্নিত হতে পারে আশঙ্কা করে পুলিশ তাঁকে পাঁচ জন সমর্থক-সহ আটক করে। তাঁদের পাটন থানায় বসিয়ে রাখা হয়। পরে অবশ্য তাঁদের ছেড়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে।

সিয়াচেন নিয়ে সমঝোতার আশা

ইসলামাবাদ, ১৪ নভেম্বর: বিশ্বের সর্বোচ্চ রণক্ষেত্র সিয়াচেন হিমবাহ থেকে সেনা সরানোর ব্যাপারে ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে শীঘ্রই চুক্তি হতে পারে। পাক সেনাবাহিনী সূত্র উদ্ধৃত করে সে দেশের একটি সংবাদপত্র আজ এই খবর দিয়েছে। সেই খবরে বলা হয়েছে, এ বছর অগস্টে প্রতিরক্ষাসচিব পর্যায়ের বৈঠকের পর থেকেই সিয়াচেন নিয়ে গোপন কূটনৈতিক আলাপ আলোচনা চলাচ্ছে দু'দেশ। সম্প্রতি প্রধানমন্ত্রী কাশ্মীর থেকে সেনা কমানোর যে ঘোষণা করেছেন, তা সেই কূটনৈতিক প্রয়াসেরই ফল বলে মন্তব্য করা হয়েছে।

ডিসেম্বরে ২১ ও ২২ তারিখ দু'দেশের বিদেশসচিবদের বৈঠক। সেখানেই প্রতিরক্ষাসচিবদের পরবর্তী বৈঠকের দিন স্থির হবে। প্রতিরক্ষাসচিবদের পাশাপাশি পদস্থ সামরিক আধিকারিকেরাও সিয়াচেন নিয়ে মত বিনিময় করবেন বলে পাক সেনাবাহিনী সূত্রে জানানো হয়েছে। কথা হবে সেনা সংখ্যা কমিয়ে ১৯৭২ সালের অবস্থায় নিয়ে যাওয়ার ব্যাপারে। শিমলা চুক্তি স্বাক্ষরিত হওয়ার সময় সিয়াচেনের যে পরিস্থিতি ছিল তা ফেরাতে দু'দেশই আগ্রহী। সেটা কী ভাবে সম্ভব, তা নিয়ে কথা হবে বলে সংবাদপত্রটি জানিয়েছে। — পি টি আই

15 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

মুশারফের কাশ্মীর-সূত্র বিবেচনায় রাজি ভারত

নয়াদিল্লি, ১৩ নভেম্বর: কাশ্মীর নিয়ে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ তাঁর প্রস্তাব সরকারি ভাবে পাঠালে ভারত তা বিবেচনা করতে রাজি বলে জানানেন বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ।

যদিও দিন কয়েক আগে হেগ-এ সেই প্রস্তাব কার্যত খারিজ করে দেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। মুশারফের প্রস্তাব— কাশ্মীরের একটি এলাকাকে সেনামুক্ত করে সেখানে স্বশাসন অথবা রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ বা দু'দেশের যৌথ নিয়ন্ত্রণ চালু করা হোক। মনমোহন বলেন, পাকিস্তান সরকারি ভাবে প্রস্তাব পাঠালে ও তাদের দেশের মাটিকে ভারত-বিরোধী জঙ্গিদের স্বার্থে ব্যবহার করতে না-দেওয়ার প্রতিশ্রুতি মানলে ভারত তা বিবেচনা করতে রাজি। আরাফতের অন্ত্যেষ্টিকে যোগ দিয়ে ফেরার পথে বিমানে সাংবাদিকদের কাছে সেই কথাই প্রতিধ্বনি করে নটবর জানিয়েছেন, কাশ্মীর নিয়ে তৃতীয় পক্ষের মধ্যস্থতার সুযোগ নেই।

২৩ তারিখ তিন দিনের সফরে ভারতে আসছেন পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী শওকত আজিজ। সার্ক বৈঠকে মনমোহনকে আমন্ত্রণ জানাবেন তিনি। নটবর বলেন, “আজিজের আসার অপেক্ষায় আছি।” সম্প্রতি পাকিস্তানে গিয়ে মার্কিন বিদেশ দফতরের উপ-সচিব রিচার্ড আর্মিটেজ মুশারফের প্রস্তাবকে ‘ভাল ভাবনা’ বলে স্বাগত জানিয়েছেন। সেই সম্পর্কে নটবর বলেন, “আমেরিকা যে আগ্রহ দেখিয়েছে তার গুরুত্ব অস্বীকার করছি না। কিন্তু কাশ্মীর ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের দ্বিপাক্ষিক সমস্যা। রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জেরও কিছু করার নেই।”

কাশ্মীর নিয়ে পাকিস্তানের কিছু দাবিও মানতে শুরু করেছে দিল্লি। কাশ্মীর থেকে সেনা কমানোর দাবি ইসলামাবাদ দীর্ঘদিন ধরেই জানিয়ে আসছিল। প্রধানমন্ত্রী হিসাবে প্রথম কাশ্মীর সফরের আগে সেনা হ্রাসের কথা ঘোষণা করেছেন মনমোহন। নটবরও এ দিন বলেছেন, “আলোচনা ভাল ভাবেই এগোচ্ছে।” তবে তিনি বলেন, পাক নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন এলাকায় জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপ চলতে দেওয়া হবে না বলে জানুয়ারিতে তৎকালীন প্রধানমন্ত্রী বাজপেয়ীকে মুশারফ যে আশ্বাস দিয়েছিলেন, তা রাখার উপরেই সার্বিক আলোচনার ভবিষ্যৎ নির্ভর করছে। — পি টি আই

ওমরের হুমকি

কাবুল, ১৩ নভেম্বর: মার্কিন নির্বাচনের আগে লাদেনের মতোই এ বার ঈদের আগে মাথা চাড়া দিলেন তালিবান নেতা মোল্লা ওমর। ‘আমেরিকার হাতের পুতুলদের কবল থেকে আফগানিস্তানকে মুক্ত’ করার আহ্বান জানিয়ে তাঁর বিবৃতিটি পাঠ করেন এক মুখপাত্র। পলাতক ওমরের ঘোষণা, মার্কিনদের সঙ্গে ষড়যন্ত্রে সামিল হলে দীর্ঘদিন মসনদে থাকতে পারত তালিবানরা। কিন্তু ‘কোনও মুজাহিদ তা ভাবতে পারে না।’ তাঁর লক্ষ্য প্রেসিডেন্ট কারজাইয়ের দিকে।

14 NOV 2004

Dixit refuses to hold bilateral talks in Pakistan

2/14/11

Advisor Slams Hurriyat Arguments

New Delhi
13 NOVEMBER

NATIONAL security advisor J.N. Dixit on Saturday slammed the Hurriyat Conference for insisting on talking to Pakistan high commissioner and not to Union home minister Shivraj Patil, saying: "We can't have this high-horse spirit."

"Let Pakistan talk to their own Kashmiris and we will do the same. Why should we respond to Pakistan's insistence that talks should be held in their territory and at their insistence," he said in an interview. Known for candid speaking, Mr Dixit, a former high commissioner to Pakistan, said Umer Farooq, acting chairman of Hurriyat, had met Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf in Amsterdam and "the Pakistan high commissioner is a permanent host to them."

"He always has time for them. We can't have this high-horse spirit—that you can speak to the high commissioner of Pakistan but not the home minister of India," he said. He was asked why India was so scared of letting Hurriyat leaders travel to Pakistan. Having a formal delegation visit Pakistan was Islamabad's tactic of having tripartite talks, in which they only want those hardline representatives who talk of separation and secession, he said.

On why India was always "so

hesitant" about the K-word and what in his view was a likely solution to the problem, Mr Dixit said: "We have to first be responsive to what the Kashmiris want and have also to think of innovative ways of not letting talks break down."

He said Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was clear on two points—that there can be no territorial delineation and that there can be no timeframe for such negotiations. Mr Dixit also made it



clear that the Hurriyat Conference was not the only organisation that represented the Kashmiris. "I am talking about the Pandits (Kashmiri) and other mainstream political parties."

When reminded that the Hurriyat leaders were engaged in talks with the Centre during the NDA regime and occupied some political space in the valley, he said the home minister had invited them for talks soon after taking office.

"But then they killed Mirwaiz Umer Farooq's uncle. Syed Ali Shah Geelani has his own preconditions, that he will talk only after going to Pakistan. — PTI

India to look at Pak plan on J&K

V. Mohan Narayan

ABOARD SPECIAL AIRCRAFT 13 NOVEMBER

INDIA on Saturday said it will hold "substantial" talks with Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz during his visit to New Delhi from November 23 and "certainly look" at any "formal" proposal by Islamabad on Kashmir but firmly ruled out any third party mediation on the vexed issue.

India has also made it clear that success of the ongoing composite dialogue depended on the neighbouring country stopping cross-border terrorism. "We are looking forward to the visit of Aziz," external affairs minister K. Natwar Singh told reporters on board special IAF aircraft while returning from Cairo after attending the military funeral of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Mr Aziz, who is the Saarc chairman, will arrive in New Delhi for a three-day visit on November 23. In keeping with Saarc practice, Mr Aziz will extend an invitation to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to attend the Saarc Summit in Dhaka from January 9 to 11. "It is obvious that we will also have substantial talks with him," Mr Singh, who was accompanied by railway minister Lalu Prasad, parliamentary affairs minister Ghulam Nabi Azad and CPM leader Sitaram Yechury, said. Asked about Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's recent suggestion on resolving the Kashmir issue, Mr Singh said a

proposal made at an Iftar party or through the media "really cannot be accepted." "If such a formal proposal is made, we will certainly look at it," he said. General Musharraf had suggested that India and Pakistan consider the option of identifying some "regions" of Kashmir on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC), demilitarise them and grant them the status of independence or joint control or under UN mandate.

To a question on US deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage during his recent visit to Islamabad describing General Musharraf's suggestion as "very forward thinking," Mr Singh said "it is for the Americans to decide."

"As far as we are concerned, this is a bilateral matter. No third party is involved. A third party involvement will not be acceptable to India," he said. "We appreciate their (US) interest in this. But there is no question of any third party getting involved in mediation," he stressed.

Observing he was glad that the composite dialogue was "progressing satisfactorily," he said "so far, there has been no backtracking and there has been no setbacks." Reminding Islamabad of General Musharraf's assurance of January 6 this year that he will not allow territory under Pakistan's control to be used by terrorists to attack third countries like India, Mr Singh said "now the total success of the composite dialogue depends on this." — PTI



NATWAR: TALKING TERMS

Singh short shrift to Pervez proposal

BHARAT BHUSHAN

The Hague, Nov. 8: In an unusually strong statement, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today dismissed out of hand a suggestion for the demilitarisation of Jammu and Kashmir.

He refused to be drawn into any discussion on demilitarisation, saying the deployment of the Indian Army on Indian territory was not open for deliberation with outsiders.

In a joint media interaction with the president of the European Council and Netherlands Prime Minister, Jan Peter Belkenende, and European Commission president Romano Prodi, Singh took an unequivocal stand on the status of Jammu and Kashmir.

"You must recognise that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India. The deployment of the Indian Army in any part of India is not something for discussion with outside agencies," Singh said

Attack on Geelani son-in-law

Srinagar, Nov. 8: Gunmen shot the son-in-law of a Kashmiri separatist leader today when he was entering his house.

Doctors said Altaf Ahmad Shah, son-in-law of All Parties Hurriyat Conference leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, was out of danger after the attack. Altaf also headed the legal cell of the group.

The attack, the second on the group in a little over a month, came at a time when separatist leaders are trying to re-unite the Hurriyat. (See Page 6)

in response to a question.

This was as close as the Prime Minister was willing to come to engage with one of the substantive components of the proposal of Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf for a region-wise demilitarisation of Jammu and Kashmir. Commenting on the proposal to divide the state into "seven regions" and demilitarising them in order to change the status of each one, Singh said India did not consider it a proposal at all.

"When we receive it officially, we will react in an appropriate manner," he said.

Singh preferred to go back to the basics — telling Pakistan to stop supporting those engaged in terrorist activities against India and only then hope for a dialogue. He recalled the statement issued by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Musharraf in January 2004 in Islamabad in this regard.

What is significant is that in a joint statement issued after the India-EU summit meeting, the European Union also called for adhering to the same Islamabad statement to create a conducive atmosphere for the composite dialogue.

The EU thus welcomed "the positive evolution of the relationship between India and Pakistan" but hoped for its "consolidation" in an atmosphere "free from the menace of terrorism and violence, in accordance with the joint press statement of January 6, 2004".

This statement, considered the first new formulation of India-Pakistan relations since the Simla Agreement of 1971, enjoins Pakistan to stop all terrorist activity in areas under its control.

It was this statement, Singh recalled, which had made restarting the composite dialogue possible. The Prime Minister said: "When I met President Musharraf in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, we reiterated our commitment to move forward the dialogue. So long as Pakistan adheres to its January 2004 commitment, we will discuss all outstanding issues with it, including Jammu and Kashmir." (See Page 8)

8 NOV 2004

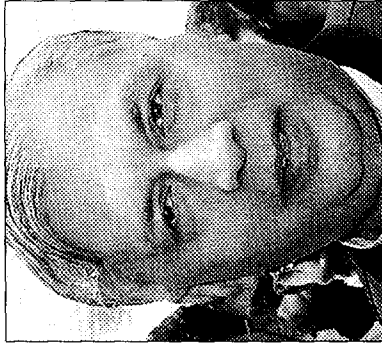
Saarc, peace on Pak PM's Delhi agenda

Nov 4 2004

Islamabad, November 7

THE INDO-PAK peace process and issues related to the Saarc regional grouping would figure high on the agenda of Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's maiden visit to India later this month, during which he would hold talks with his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh and other leaders.

Aziz, who will visit Sri Lanka and the Maldives on November 21 and 22 in his capacity of the Saarc chairman, will arrive in India at the end of his tour on November 23, officials here said. During his two-day visit to the country, Aziz will hold comprehensive talks with Indian leaders, including President APJ Abdul Kalam, Prime Minister Man-



Shaukat Aziz

mohan Singh, Congress president Sonia Gandhi and other ruling and Opposition leaders.

Aziz's itinerary was tentatively finalised after consulta-

SUMMIT TALKS

tions with Pakistan's High Commissioner to New Delhi, Aziz Ahmed Khan, yesterday. The Pak envoy is currently in his country to finalise the arrangements.

Indian ambassador to Islamabad Shiv Shankar Menon also called on his counterpart last night to discuss the schedule.

A number of trade-related issues, including granting of MFN status to India and Pakistan's response to 72 proposals made by India during the last round of Composite Dialogue to improve trade relations between the two countries, are expected to come up for during Aziz's visit.

demilitarising them.

His visit comes ahead of the second round of Composite Dialogue process on Kashmir and seven other issues initiated by the two countries.

Earlier this week, Aziz visited Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh where he raised hackles in Pakistan by stating Islamabad was opposed to changing of the Saarc charter, which prohibits discussion on bilateral issues at its forum.

ences over various issues.

As both the sides want some concrete progress, particularly on the issues of nuclear CBMs and the bus service, they expect the meeting between Aziz and Dixit to prepare a suitable ground, sources were quoted as saying by Pakistani daily *The Nation*.

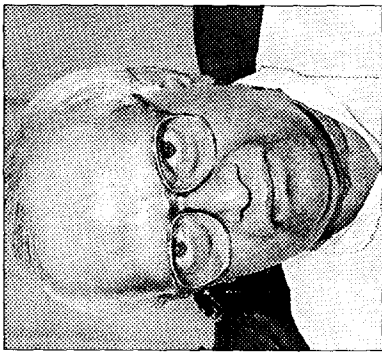
According to sources, the two have met secretly a few times in the past few months in Dubai and Singapore to sort out various bilateral issues. Foreign secretaries of the two countries are scheduled to meet in Islamabad next month to begin the second round of the eight-point Composite Dialogue process. "Aziz will meet Dixit some time after November 20 as a part of Track-II diplomacy to sort out differ-

ences between the two sides over various issues, including the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, nuclear CBMs, trade and commerce-related matters," an official source said here.

During the November 29-30 talks, the two sides are expected to discuss narcotics control, train services between Mumbombay and Kohkhrapar, meetings between Coast Guard officials to establish hotline links, the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service and several trade issues.

Senior officials in New Delhi and Islamabad hope that the emissaries of Pervez Musharraf and Manmohan Singh would be able "to find some ways and means to have mutually acceptable solutions to these issues".

Agencies



J.N. Dixit

Aziz's visit comes close on the heels of the recent Kashmir proposal by Pervez Musharraf, who suggested division of the Valley into seven regions and

Track-II diplomacy

AHEAD OF the next round of talks between Delhi and Islamabad later this month, National Security Adviser J.N. Dixit and his Pakistani counterpart Tariq Aziz will meet to iron out differ-

Patil okays Hurriyat leaders' visit to Pak

Masood Hussain
SRINAGAR 6 NOVEMBER

HOME minister Shivraj Patil on Saturday said Hurriyat leaders' Pakistan visit should not be a problem but regretted that they have projected the demand as a precondition for the third round of talks. He said the government would consider the demand for the withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act if it comes formally from the mil-

itants. Interestingly, Patil's visit witnessed a spurt in the violence across the state.

"There is no restriction of any kind on the movement between two countries. The bus is plying and recently Pakistan journalists were here. If they (Hurriyat) want to visit Pakistan there is a proper method and we will look into it", home minister said on the first day of his maiden visit to Kashmir. By afternoon, he had as many as eight interactions with various political parties includ-



ing the ruling alliance. Both Governors Lt Gen S.K. Sinha and chief minister Mufti Sayeed offered him their assessment of the security situation prevailing in the state.

Patil said all the efforts—'behind the scene, before the curtain, over-ground'—should continue to initiate a dialogue. "We want to talk to everybody including Hurriyat Conference irrespective of the influence they enjoy. We want to change the situation here for a better future in which investment could take place

and chronic unemployment could be tackled", he said. To effect a change, Patil said lot many initiatives on emotional, psychological, economic fronts need to be taken. He said the central government was ready to evaluate the losses that J&K might have incurred because of the availability of the limited use of its waters after the Indus Water Treaty.

When asked if they had extended invitation to the groups for talks, home minister said the dialogues do not start from an invitation.

সীমান্ত-সমস্যা বাড়ছেই, তথ্য দিল স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৫ নভেম্বর: পাকিস্তান আন্তঃসীমান্ত সমস্যা বন্ধ করলে জম্মু-কাশ্মীর-সহ দু'তরফের বিবদমান বিষয়গুলি মিটিয়ে ফেলা হবে। আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের এই ঘোষণার পাশাপাশি কেন্দ্র এক বিবৃতিতে জানিয়েছে, পাক অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরে জঙ্গি প্রশিক্ষণ শিবিরের সংখ্যা কমতো দূরের কথা, বরং বেড়েই চলেছে।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ আজ এক অনুষ্ঠানে বলেন, “পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে সমস্ত বকেয়া বিষয়গুলি মিটিয়ে ফেলতে আমরা প্রতিশ্রুতিবদ্ধ। তবে শর্ত একটাই। জানুয়ারি মাসে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ তৎকালীন প্রধানমন্ত্রী বাজপেয়ীকে কথা দিয়েছিলেন আন্তঃসীমান্ত সমস্যাকে মদত দেবে না পাকিস্তান। সেই কথা যদি অক্ষরে অক্ষরে মানা হয় তবেই ভারত জম্মু কাশ্মীর-সহ সমস্ত বিবদমান বিষয়ে আলোচনার মাধ্যমে সমাধানের চেষ্টা করবে।”

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দেওয়া এই শর্তপূরণের থেকে পাকিস্তান যে এখনও বহু দূরে সে কথা আজ স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছে কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক। কাল তিন দিনের জম্মু-কাশ্মীর সফরে যাচ্ছেন কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল। তার আগে তথ্য ও পরিসংখ্যান দিয়ে স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক জানিয়ে দিল, উপত্যকায় অশান্তির আঁচ বাড়ছে বই কগছে না। লস্কর-ই-তেবা, জৈশ-ই-মহম্মদ, হরকত-উল মুজাহিদিন, আল-বাদার প্রমুখ ইসলামিক জঙ্গি সংগঠনের নাম উল্লেখ করে স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক জানাচ্ছে, তহবিল থেকে প্রশিক্ষণ সমস্ত ব্যাপারেই পাকিস্তানের সমর্থন পাচ্ছে কাশ্মীরি জঙ্গিরা।

জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরের সমস্যা দমনে একটি বহুমুখী কৌশলের কথাও উল্লেখ করেছে স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক। যার মধ্যে রয়েছে—

- কেন্দ্র ও রাজ্য সরকারি সংস্থাগুলির সমন্বয়ের মাধ্যমে অভিযান এবং এই বিষয়ে একটি সম্মিলিত সদর দফতর গঠন।

- ভারত-পাক সীমান্তে কাঁটাতারের বেড়া নির্মাণ।

- নজরদারির জন্য উন্নতমানের প্রযুক্তি ব্যবহার।

- আন্তঃসীমান্ত সমস্যার মোকাবিলার জন্য গোয়েন্দা-তথ্য নির্ভর অভিযান।

- অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়নে জোর।

- জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরে রক্তপাত কমাতে যে সব গোষ্ঠী কথা বলতে আগ্রহী তাদের সঙ্গে কথার সূচনা।

- পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে দ্বিপাক্ষিক আলোচনা।

- আন্তঃসীমান্ত সমস্যা রোধে পাকিস্তানের উপর চাপ বাড়ানো।

নভেম্বরের তৃতীয় সপ্তাহে কাশ্মীরে যাচ্ছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। আজ স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল জানিয়েছেন, “ছরিয়ত-সহ সমস্ত সংগঠনের সঙ্গেই বিনা শর্তে কথা বলতে বিশেষভাবে আমি আগ্রহী।”

জঙ্গি সমস্যা রোধে সার্বিক ব্যবস্থা: আজ স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের পরামর্শ দাতা কমিটির বৈঠকে পাটিল সদস্যদের জানিয়েছেন, দেশের ভিতরে জঙ্গি সমস্যা রোধে একটি সার্বিক ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে। তার মধ্যে রয়েছে আলোচনা, আর্থিক উন্নয়ন প্রভৃতি।

6 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Pakistan denies Pervez gave any J&K proposal

200 Pak

HT 2 20/10

Press Trust of India
Islamabad, October 29

AS PAKISTAN President Pervez Musharraf came under attack from the Opposition and Islamic parties for his new Kashmir formula, the government today clarified that the General had not made any proposal, but thrown open certain ideas for a debate to elicit public opinion.

Musharraf had not given any proposal for resolving the issue; he had only asked the media to carry out a debate to elicit public opinion, a Foreign Office spokesman said in a statement.

While elaborating on Musharraf's talks with journalists at an Ifar dinner on Tuesday, he clarified that the President had not given any proposal as reported in a section of the Press. He said Musharraf had described various ethnic and geographical regions of Jammu and Kashmir and said one way to initiate the debate was to identify regions, demilitarise and look at ways to change their status. The spokesman said the media should carry out a debate to elicit public opinion, which — if conducted in these broad parameters — will bring out dozens of viewpoints.

The spokesman said the President's statement set out a direction



Pervez Musharraf

towards a purposeful analysis on options for discussion. "The President reiterated Pakistan's longstanding position that the status quo on Kashmir was not the solution and the Line of Control could never be accepted as an international border", he said.

The statement came a day after Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri told reporters in Karachi that the option suggested by Musharraf was not final and it was open for alterations and changes. He said there was nothing new in the formula suggested by Musharraf proposing to divide Kashmir on both sides of the LoC into seven regions and then demilitarise them and change their status.

Moreover, options were considered for finding a final solution to the Kashmir issue during the Agra summit, Kasuri said. "The President's proposal was meant to invite a debate to resolve the issue. Nothing is final and it's open to alterations and changes", he said.

General's decision below expectations: McKinnon

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, October 29

COMMONWEALTH Secretary-General Don McKinnon today said Pervez Musharraf's decision to continue as army chief and not to delink it from the office of President was "below expectations", but felt this did not negate the other steps taken towards return of democracy.

"The Commonwealth ministers did have high expectations about the issue of splitting the role of President and that of army chief in Pakistan," McKinnon, who called on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, told reporters here. "Therefore, what's

been happening there (Pakistan) recently is below expectations. But we don't regard that fact as necessarily negating everything else that's been done," McKinnon also met Musharraf during his current four-nation tour. He was responding to a question on whether the Commonwealth was satisfied with the pace at which Musharraf was working for ushering back democracy in Pakistan.

McKinnon said he had indicated to Musharraf that the Commonwealth was "by and large" satisfied with most of the measures he had put in place. These included the holding of general elections, outlining a roadmap for democracy, accepting Com-



Manmohan Singh with Don McKinnon in New Delhi on Friday.

monwealth's suggestion that the National Security Council should have a majority of elected people and converting several military decrees into statutes.

India has told McKinnon it is for the Commonwealth to take a

decision on Pakistan's continuance in the grouping if Musharraf decided to continue as Army Chief. This was conveyed by External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh during a meeting in New Delhi.

AP

India rules out media dialogue on Kashmir

11-1
29/10

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New Delhi/Srinagar: In a



P Musharraf

cautious response to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's new formulation to solve the Kashmir problem, India on Tuesday said it did not like to discuss the issue through the media, adding that the composite dialogue process was the appropriate forum to raise it.

"We do not believe that Jammu and Kashmir is a subject on which discussions can be held through the media," external affairs ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna told reporters. "As you are already aware, it is one of the subjects in the composite dialogue process. So, if there are any proposals, it should be brought to the forum," he said.

Speaking at an Iftar dinner in Islamabad on Monday night, the Pakistan President had suggested that to solve the issue both the countries should identify the regions on both sides of the Line of Control, demilitarise them and change their status through independence or joint control or

UN mandate.

Reacting to Musharraf's proposal, the Congress, an ally in the ruling coalition in Jammu and Kashmir, said the party was against the division of the state.

The two factions of the Hurriyat Conference cautiously reacted to Musharraf's proposal. "Hurriyat's

Pak oppn dubs it 'betrayal'

Islamabad: Opposition parties in Pakistan slammed Musharraf's new proposals on solving the Kashmir problem, saying it was a "betrayal of the cause," and a "roll back" of the country's policy on the issue, senior MMA leader and vice president of the Jamat ulema Islami (JUI), Hafeez Hussain Ahmad said. PTI

stand is very clear on such issues. Either the people of Jammu and Kashmir should be given the right to self determination or a tripartite dialogue should be held to find a solution to the Kashmir issue," hardline leader Syed Ali Shah told mediapersons. PTI

► Pressure tactics, Page 14

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 OCT 2004

Gen's Kashmir formula to apply pressure on India

11-19
27/10

By Jai Taraporevala
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The call issued by Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf for a new approach on Kashmir should be interpreted in terms of a five-fold objective.

First, he is implicitly underscoring the point that the current rapprochement between the two countries will come under strain unless the implementation of confidence-building measures is accompanied by a substantive dialogue on Kashmir. Second, by holding out the

possibility of various options, both in terms of geography (not necessarily treating the territory of Kashmir as an integral whole) and political status (either establishing a condominium or granting independence), Musharraf is seeking to demonstrate that Islamabad has tangibly moved away from its traditional insistence on the holding of a plebiscite.

This, in turn, is aimed at increasing the pressure on

India to come up with its own new set of proposals.

gwp park

Third, Musharraf is hoping to spark a debate in Pakistan on the alternative ways of resolving the Kashmir problem and, at the same time, reduce the domestic criticism he faces for the recent vote in parliament allowing him to retain the posts of president and army chief until 2007 and for his ongoing support for Washington's so called war



PERVEZ

on terror. Fourth, Musharraf would seem to calculate that his latest initiative would place Islamabad in a better position to reconcile the differences between the two factions of the Hurriyat Conference—something which is essential if Pakistan is to strengthen its bargaining clout with India. Finally, Musharraf is likely to use his proposals to urge whichever administration emerges after the US presidential elections to facilitate a substantive dialogue between India and Pakistan on Kashmir.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 OCT 2004

Delhi cautious over ‘food for thought’

581
27/10
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 26. — Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf's formulation to resolve the J&K problem is a significant departure from any previous solution offered by Islamabad, and probably the first time any Pakistani leader has spoken of doing away with the plebiscite.

And although, according to New Delhi, there can be “no question of change” in the external status of J&K, with any solution based on the redrawing of boundaries and further partition not on its radar screens at all, the government is playing down General Musharraf's suggestions, reacting very cautiously so that the tempo of the bilateral thaw is not disrupted.

It would not like to discuss the

issue through the media, the government said. One of eight topics slated for discussion under the composite dialogue process, the foreign ministry spokesman said, was the Jammu & Kashmir peace process. *India-Pakistan*

“We don't believe that J&K is a subject on which discussions can be held through the media.” Delhi views the proposal as indicative of Islamabad's realisation that the position hitherto held by it on J&K is not sustainable. The NDA termed it a “non-starter”.



Pak Opposition stand

The remarks drew criticism from Pak Opposition. “I don't think Gen. Musharraf's proposal is in the interest of Pakistan,” said Raja Zafarul Haq, leader of the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy, adds PTI.

THE STATESMAN

27 OCT 2004

কাশ্মীর নিয়ে

নয়া প্রস্তাব

মুশারফের

ইসলামাবাদ, ২৫ অক্টোবর:
কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধানে নতুন মীমাংসাসূত্রের কথা বললেন পারভেজ মুশারফ। পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের প্রস্তাব, গোটা কাশ্মীরের কয়েকটি এলাকাকে চিহ্নিত করে সেই জায়গাগুলি থেকে সেনা সরিয়ে নেওয়া হোক। তার পরে সেই অঞ্চলে রাষ্ট্রপঞ্জের তত্ত্বাবধান বা ভারত-পাক যৌথ নিয়ন্ত্রণ প্রতিষ্ঠা করা হোক। নিয়ন্ত্রণরখাকে স্থায়ী সীমান্তে পরিণত করা বা গণভোট যে আর কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধান নয়, সে কথাও জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট।

আজ একটি ইকতারের আসরে সরকারি কর্তা, কূটনীতিক ও সংবাদমাধ্যমের লোকজনের সামনে কাশ্মীর নিয়ে এই নতুন প্রস্তাব রেখেছেন মুশারফ। এবং বলেছেন, আগে কখনও কোথাও তিনি এই মীমাংসাসূত্রের কথা বলেননি। নিউ ইয়র্কে ভারতীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে তার বৈঠকের পরে ভারত ও পাকিস্তান কাশ্মীর-প্রসঙ্গে সম্ভাব্য সব উপায় খতিয়ে দেখতে আগ্রহী হওয়ায় পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট এখন নতুন প্রস্তাবের কথা বলছেন।

মুশারফের ব্যাখ্যায়, “পুরো কাশ্মীরটাকে চোখের সামনে রাখুন। কাশ্মীরে সাতটা অঞ্চল আছে। দু’টা আছে পাকিস্তানে, বাকি পাঁচটা ভারতে। আমার প্রস্তাব, কোনও অঞ্চলকে চিহ্নিত করা হোক। সেটা পুরো কাশ্মীর হতে পারে, সাতটার একটা বা তার কোনও অংশও হতে পারে। চিহ্নিত এলাকা থেকে স্থায়ী ভিত্তিতে সেনা সরানো হোক। তার পরে সেই অঞ্চলকে নতুন করে মান্যতা দেওয়া হোক।” মুশারফ মনে করছেন, এই পথে কোনও দেশেরই কিছু হারানোর থাকবে না। আবার কাশ্মীরের হাতেও ক্ষমতা যাওয়ায় সেখানকার মানুষ খুশি হবেন।

দুই প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বৈঠক।
নয়াদিল্লির খবর, প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে নভেম্বরে প্রথম বৈঠকে বসবেন পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী শৌকত আজিজ। পাক হাই কমিশনের মুখপাত্র রই রিয়াজ হুসেন বলেছেন, “সার্কেট চেয়ারম্যান হিসাবে নভেম্বর মাসের মঝামাঝি ভারতে আসছেন আজিজ। তখনই ভারতীয় নেতাদের সঙ্গে তার দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠক হবে।” জানুয়ারিতে ঢাকায় সার্ক শীর্ষ সম্মেলনে মনমোহন-আজিজের ফের বৈঠক হতে পারে। — পি টি আই

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

26 OCT 2004

India, Pak agree to check border crime

Chandigarh: India and Pakistan on Thursday signed a nine-point agreement to enhance cooperation between border forces, including joint efforts to check trans border crimes and strengthening of patrolling and surveillance to check illegal crossing.

However, Islamabad stuck to its long-standing policy of calling the international border in Jammu and Kashmir a "working boundary".

The agreement was signed at the conclusion of the four-day talks between a Border Security Force (BSF) delegation led by additional DGP A K Mitra and a delegation of Pakistan Rangers led by Maj Gen Javed Zia. Officials of survey of India and survey of Pakistan also at-

tended the meeting. ¹¹⁰ Mitra, addressing a press conference with Zia, said the two sides had agreed on joint efforts to check trans border crimes, especially drug smuggling and to exchange lists of smugglers, facilitate return of inadvertent border crossers after verification in shortest possible time and quick verification of persons reported missing from along the border.

"Our stand is clear that the common border between the two countries in the state (J & K) other than the LoC is a working boundary," said Zia, who left the joint conference in a huff when asked about continuing cross border infiltration.

Mitra, too, said that there

also "inspired" both the forces, the Pak general said.

Describing the nine-point agreement as a "happy beginning", Mitra said, "We hope that these steps would improve the situation on the border and be a step forward towards improving relations between the two border forces."

Mitra also said that since the last bi-annual meeting at Lahore in Pakistan in March of this year, the BSF had returned 57 persons who had accidentally crossed the border while the Pak Rangers had handed over 39 persons.

He added that 14 intruders from Pakistan were killed since January this year, but none of them was related to militancy. ^{PTI}

Indo-Pak thaw gets a jolt

Saurabh Shukla
New Delhi, October 14

WITH THE increased people-to-people contacts between India and Pakistan building an ambience of peace, a worried military establishment in Islamabad has now decided to throw a spanner to such contacts.

What seems to be building into a pattern several contacts have been grounded by Islamabad over the last few days. On Tuesday the Pakistani Interior Ministry stopped the visit of a 12-member delegation of Pakistani political workers and journalists from visiting Charar-e-Sharif in Jammu and Kashmir at the Wagah border on Tuesday.

The delegation was being hosted by South Asia Peace Committee led by Nirmala Deshpande, who was waiting on the Indian side of the border. The permission was denied at the last minute, although the visit was earlier cleared by the Pakistani Foreign and Interior Ministry, sources told *Hindustan Times*.

This is not the only case, while a Made in Pakistan exhibition was allowed in India hosted by FICCI earlier this year, permission was not granted by Islamabad to hold a Made in India exhibition, which was scheduled for this month. The exhibition would have helped two sides revive their trade links, which has been held hostage of the political divide between the two countries.

Also on the military establishment's chopping board was a Jatha of Sikh pilgrims that wanted to vis-



BSF Additional Director General (West) A K Mitra (left) and Pakistan rangers DG Maj Gen Javed Zia address a joint Press briefing on the concluding day of second Bi-Annual meeting between the officials of two border forces in Chandigarh on Thursday.

PTI

it Kartarpur Sahib, another one from Shadani Durbar sect was not allowed permission to visit Pakistan. While no reason has been put forward for grounding these visits, analysts believe that the military regime is rattled by the overwhelming response to the people-to-people contacts between the two countries especially in Pakistan.

While those coming from Pakistan have been exposed to a liberal democratic set-up in India, this has removed the myths about con-

ditions in India and questions are now being asked about the situation that exists in Pakistan.

Humanitarian considerations have also been forgotten, for instance Islamabad has not responded to several requests made by India to release 500 fishermen that still are in their custody. "We have made several requests. We are keen to release 100 Pakistani fishermen but despite an agreement reached between the two Foreign Secretaries, Pakistan is silent on the is-

sue," said a source.

In fact Islamabad has also reduced the number of visas being issued by its High Commission here resulting into several hundred families camping in the open outside the Pakistani High Commission. They have been forced to wait for days outside the High Commission in the capital's diplomatic area, and the sight certainly does not present a picture of trust and confidence in the bilateral ties between the two neighbours.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 OCT 2004

India must show its desire for friendship with its neighbour

Business with Pakistan

The prime minister, Manmohan Singh, said after his one-on-one meeting with the president of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, that he thought "we can do business with him". Some people have criticized his statement, on the ground that he should not have said this without consulting his cabinet and should have, in any case made it in parliament. Others have said that the prime minister was ignoring the unreliability that the "devious" general has shown in the past in his dealings with India. They feel that he has still to prove that he can be trusted to stick to commitments and to keep his word.

Perhaps we should consider the constraints on his vision for Pakistan. He is not an Islamic fundamentalist of the vintage of the late president Zia ul-Haq. He is a commando and changes his tactics quickly when he thinks the circumstances demand it. He was not above using fundamentalists as he did when he helped to build up the taliban. He saw control over Afghanistan as a means to put pressure on India to settle the Kashmir dispute. The taliban were his instrument.

After 9/11 he was probably the first to understand how it could benefit Pakistan and help him achieve his vision for it. He changed tactics and abandoned the taliban. He anticipated the American invasion of Afghanistan and decided that he could not stand in the way. Instead he cooperated, withal hesitantly and not always fully, but enough for them to regard him as a close ally. He obviously observed the very adverse impact of Islamic fundamentalism on the Pakistani society and image in the world. He became an enemy of terrorism since he saw the opportunity it gave him to crack down on terrorist groups within Pakistan that were giving it the name of a failing state, fragmenting into bits.

He was always for putting a closure to the Kashmir issue. As a soldier, he recognized what the defeat of Pakistan in three wars with India proved — that Pakistan was economically and militarily too small to ever win a war with India. Nuclear weapons might contain a war but could not settle the Kashmir issue. Kargil was his attempt to dominate the road to Kashmir and force India to the negotiating table. When it failed he jumped at the opportunity to cut a deal with a peace-loving Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Agra. He probably recognized that Vajpayee and the Bharatiya Janata Party were more

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COMMENTARAO

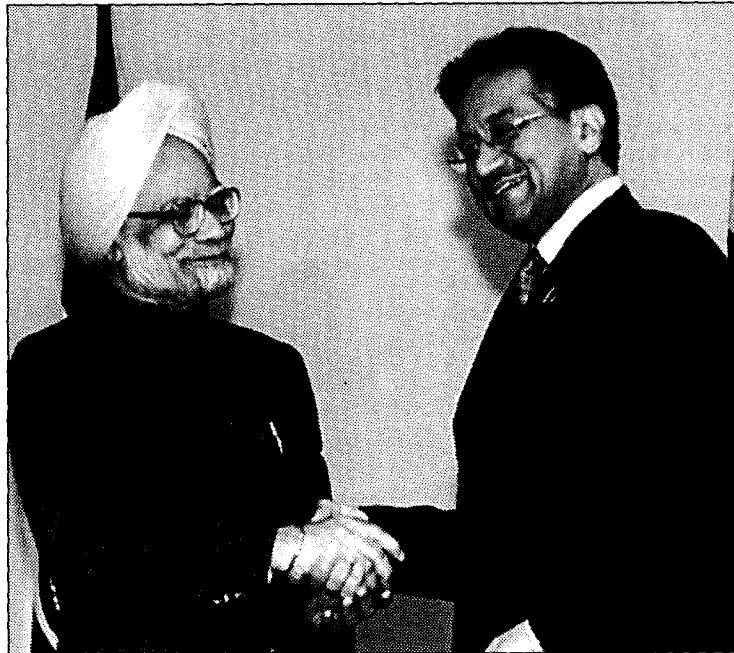
S.L. RAO

likely to settle Kashmir than other political parties. But his very clever charming of Indian editors at the press conference and his haughty walkout when he did not get his way renewed Indian doubts about his reliability. He tried to get his American allies involved with Kashmir but the United States of America and the rest of the world were more interested in the goodwill of India.

He saw that Kashmir was not merely the "core issue" with India but it was the root cause of Pakistan's erratic development, of its

to learn how India is faring as a democratic society is growing.

Musharraf's objectives must be to get Kashmir out of the way so that Pakistan can go about building a prosperous society. For this he must rid the country of Islamic fundamentalisms. Obviously he will not disband the "cross-border terrorism" altogether till Kashmir is settled, if then. Our guard cannot come down on this matter while we should put all possible pressure so that terrorism is reduced as it has in the last nine months. But Mushar-



‘ Musharraf's objectives for Pakistan coincide with Indian interests ’

being hostage to fundamentalists and its dependence on terrorist groups. These began to operate inside Pakistan as well. His freedom of action is constrained by the army from which he draws his power. Elements in the army regard compromising on Kashmir as contrary to what they had fought so many wars for. They are not keen to restrain cross-border terrorism. Hence the flip-flops when at times after weeks of sweet reasonableness, Musharraf becomes belligerent about Kashmir or suddenly denies that there are terrorists moving across the border from India to Pakistan. This constraint imposed by an army that he cannot entirely trust (after all, the almost successful assassination attempts on him must have had information and support from the top ranks of the army) must be recognized and used by India in its negotiations with him.

Our approach must be to make friends with the many liberal elements in Pakistani society (including the army) while taking unilateral actions to encourage Pakistanis

cannot himself be happy at continued dependence on and support to these terrorist groups. His interest in resolving Kashmir is closely tied to his desire to rid Pakistan of fundamentalisms.

Tactically his support to the hardline wing of the Hurriyat in Kashmir is akin to allowing the terrorist groups to continue operations, but on a leash. It is another instrument to get a better settlement on Kashmir when India starts negotiations.

The Indian objective must be to eliminate or at least drastically reduce terrorism and maintain the integrity of Pakistan so that we do not get the Wild West that is Afghanistan closer to our borders.

Pakistani hostility to India has seriously affected its development while India has had to waste re-

sources to contain it. It has, until 9/11, bedevilled our relationships with other Islamic countries. China has used Pakistan to add *masala* to this hostility by fairly inexpensive but successful support to Pakistan. Kashmir has meant substantial financial and human costs for India. It has given human rights groups a stick to beat India with. Dead army and other security personnel on duty in Kashmir exacerbate anti-Muslim sentiment in the country. The large presence of security personnel in Kashmir locks up our forces in a civilian operation that can only brutalize them and at high cost. India can bear the cost but it is a diversion from development. Terrorist groups in Pakistan, the declining law and order situation there, the infiltration of Islamic fundamentalism into India, are all against Indian interests. Musharraf's objectives for Pakistan thus coincide with Indian interests. This is what "doing business" is about.

But after years of advertising India as the "enemy" it is difficult for the army to unbend. That is why reciprocity is so slow to India's offers of confidence building measures. "Doing business" also requires that agreements be honoured. Here we can never be certain, given the constraints imposed on Musharraf by hostility within his army and the religious clergy that the army has encouraged for so long. The India-Pakistan border will always be a tense one. The relationship will never be overly friendly. For one thing India is too big and apparently successful. The envy of India is endemic to south Asia where the other countries regard India as a giant neighbour that acts superior and dominating.

We have to keep our guard up. However if the strategy is to make friends, we should unilaterally encourage visits of ordinary people, journalists and academics. Some of this has started. We should encourage intellectual intimacy through scholarships to IITs, IITs, IIMS, medical colleges, and so on. The ICSSR should have a research budget for collaborative social sciences research about India-Pakistan relationships and societies. We should invite them to our various conferences and conventions and provide funding to make it happen. We need to go out of our way to be helpful and friendly. Let us not wait for Pakistan to respond to such measures but just go ahead and publicize them. Given the macho attitude of the Pakistan army, they will not want to appear responsive to our initiatives. But they will respond in some way at some time. We must demonstrate our desire for friendship with Pakistan, whoever might be the person in power. Some unilateral actions by us will surely improve our business with Pakistan.

The Telegraph

THURSDAY 7 OCTOBER 2004 VOL. XXIII NO 92

CIVIL WELCOME

The decision of the government of India to allow a large group of journalists from Pakistan to visit Jammu and Kashmir needs to be welcomed and supported. By all accounts, the visit, so far, has been hugely successful. The task now is to build on this visit to generate greater people-to-people contact between the two countries. As is well known, the government of India has traditionally been reluctant to allow foreigners, and especially Pakistanis, to visit Jammu and Kashmir since the onset of militancy in 1990. However, as the political situation in Jammu and Kashmir changed, New Delhi has encouraged foreigners to visit different parts of the state, including Kashmir valley. But Jammu and Kashmir was, till recently, out of bounds for Pakistanis. The new government led by Mr Manmohan Singh seems to have now reversed that decision. Indeed, it is the first time that nearly 20 Pakistani journalists, representing virtually the whole spectrum of the media in the country, are visiting Kashmir. They represent major national dailies like *The News*, *The Nation*, *Dawn* and the *Daily Jang* and newly established private television channels like GEO TV and Indus TV. In Jammu, the journalists visited migrant camps of Kashmiri Pandits, interacted with local media, spoke at a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, and discussed political issues with academics and students. No restrictions whatsoever have been put on their movements. In the Kashmir valley, the visiting press delegation will meet the separatist leadership of the All Party Hurriyat Conference and government officials, including the chief minister. This is unprecedented and path-breaking. For the first time, the Pakistani people will get a first-hand account of the situation in the valley from their own citizens.

The message that New Delhi clearly wants to convey is that there is nothing to hide in Kashmir and that the Pakistan government's propaganda may have been off-target. The visit of the journalists may also help to create a conducive atmosphere for the further strengthening of the peace process between India and Pakistan. It may also help to provide the Pakistan president, Mr Pervez Musharraf, if he is so inclined, the space to move down from his absolutist stand on Kashmir. The government of India must now build on this latest initiative. It is clear that one of the greatest strengths of India is its democracy and its vibrant civil society. It must allow Pakistan's people to be exposed to India's civil society without demanding any reciprocity from Islamabad.

THE TELEGRAPH

7 OCT 2004

Pakistani journalist team in Kashmir

THE HINDU NEWSPAPER

THE HINDU 1 OCT 2004

WAGAH (AMRITSAR), OCT. 3. A 15-member delegation of Pakistani journalists today crossed over to India on its way to perhaps the first-ever visit to Jammu and Kashmir by a team of scribes from that country. "This is for the first time after a gap of 57 years that the Government of India has agreed to the visit of Pakistani journalists to Jammu and Kashmir," the leader of the Pakistani delegation and Secretary General, South Asia Free Media Association, Imtiaz Alam, said soon after crossing the Radcliff Line at Wagah.

First-hand experience

"We do have plans to visit Srinagar, Kashmir, Anantnag and all troubled areas of the valley and in this regard the Indian Government has already granted permission to us to move in the valley and interact with the locals to have a first-hand experience of their plight," he said.

The time has come for the journalists of both the nations to

come out of the grip of "nationalistic" ideology, as they should "practically see what is happening across the LoC instead of biased reporting."

Expressing his gratitude to the Indian Government, Mr. Alam said: "Today we are heading for Jammu where we are supposed to meet the various Muslims and non-Muslim organisations besides having an interactive session with the Jammu-based journalists."

To meet Pandits, Hurriyat

"During our stay in the valley we will also interact with the Kashmiri Pandits to know about their lifestyle and problems faced by them," Mr. Alam said.

"Our programme also includes meeting political party leaders besides an interaction with the Hurriyat Conference." The delegation would interact with various business organisations for prospective development of industry and business in

the valley, he said.

"We have programmes to meet the educationists from the valley beside the vice-chancellor of the Jammu and Kashmir University."

Bus service

Mr. Alam said the delegation members were carrying with them the demand for uninterrupted bus service from Muzaffarabad to Kashmir, Amritsar to Lahore besides the opening of Sialkot from the Pakistani side and the Jammu border from the Indian side so that both the nations could become visa-free regions. He demanded a change in the 1972 visa policies.

Cable signals

A journalist of *The Dawn* daily said that both the nations should allow their cable operators to release signals of all the TV channels so that masses could have better information on both sides.

The delegations will reach

New Delhi to attend the conference of the Indian chapter of SAFMA on October 11. The delegation included Tariq Maqbool, Nasir Biag Chugri, Roshan Mughal, Syed Ejaz Haider Bukhari, Marian Baabar, Mujahid Ali Bareilvi, Mohhamed Afjal Khan, Syed Talet Hussain, Rehana Hakim, Imtiaz Khan, Mastan-sar Javed, Nusrat Javeed, Raja Mohhamed, Syed Mehboob Ali and Munnizae Jahangir and added "it is a step in the right direction." — PTI

Right step: Mufti

UNI reports from Srinagar Welcoming the first-ever visit of Pakistani journalists to the State, the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, today said such interactions would help "reduce distances" and create the right atmosphere for improvement of relations. Talking to a news channel, he hoped that the visit would boost the ongoing process of reconciliation between India and Pakistan.

The K-word and T-word

Don't get ensnarled in the semantics of Indo-Pak joint statements. Look at the big picture

THERE has been concern in some quarters that the joint statement between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Pervez Musharraf in New York has failed to mention the T-word — terrorism from across the border — while accepting the K-word — finding a solution to the Kashmir issue. We could tie ourselves into knots over such vocabulary or the import of semantics in joint statements and declarations. But it is obvious that January's Islamabad joint press statement is not only not over-ruled by the New York statement, but the latter specifically recognises the spirit of the Islamabad statement. As for the Kashmir issue, its resolution through a bilateral, peaceful dialogue, has been very much a part of the Indian position since the 1972 Simla Agreement. This, it may be recalled, was also the advice given by China's president, Jiang Zemin, to Pakistan eight years ago, although Pakistan actually hardened its pre-conditions rather than listening to its senior strategic partner.

The most significant element of the Manmohan-Musharraf meeting is that both sides have given up specifying any pre-conditions in the pursuit of the bilateral dialogue "to restore normalcy and co-operation between India and Pakistan". While Kashmir would continue to be discussed within the framework of the composite dialogue, as much as cross-border infiltration and terrorism would be, the result that we need to keep in mind is that such terrorism would have to end for the sake of normalcy. Settlement of the Kashmir

issue would remain extremely problematic if killings go on. But in giving up the previous government's position of making normalcy with Pakistan almost conditional, if not a hostage, to the stoppage of cross-border terrorism, the Manmohan Singh government has managed to get Pakistan to forego its favourite mantra of Kashmir as a "core issue" and its resolution as a precondition to progress on other aspects of the composite dialogue.

The result has been not only in the atmospherics of the process of building normalcy in our relations but also in the substance — Pakistan, for instance, did not raise the issue at the UN General Assembly. Obviously, backdoor diplomacy played an important part in turning a crucial page in bilateral relations even if opening a new chapter is some pages away. The challenge now is to actually start implementing some of the agreed steps in CBMs and generating the necessary atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding for the sake of the people of the two countries. The forthcoming visit of Pakistani journalists to J&K, therefore, is a positive step in this process. What we need to bear in mind is that there will be hardliners on both sides willing to obstruct the process of normalisation. Attempts to derail the process, probably with desperate viciousness, should be expected. This requires both sides to retain their cool and defeat the goals of such elements for the sake of the larger purpose: achieving a lasting peace on the subcontinent.

ভারত-পাক কথা সামরিক স্তরেও, জানালেন প্রণব

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: সিয়াচেনে
উত্তেজনা কমাতে সামরিক স্তরে
ভারত-পাকিস্তান আলোচনা হবে।
মঙ্গলবার কলকাতায় ভারত চেম্বার অব
কমার্সের বার্ষিক সাধারণ সভায়
প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়
বলেন, আগস্টে দিল্লিতে পাকিস্তানের
প্রতিরক্ষা সচিবের সঙ্গে ভারতের
প্রতিরক্ষা সচিবের বৈঠকেই সিদ্ধান্ত
নেওয়া হয়েছিল, দু'দেশের মধ্যে
সামরিক স্তরে আলোচনা হবে।

প্রণববাবু বলেন, কাশ্মীরে সীমান্তে
অনুপ্রবেশ কিছুটা কমেছে। ভারত
থেকে পাকিস্তানে যাওয়ার ঘটনাও
কমার ইঙ্গিত আছে। পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট
পারভেজ মুশারফের সঙ্গে প্রধানমন্ত্রী
মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে আলোচনার
ফলে উত্তেজনা কমাতে পারে কি?
কিছুটা কমাতে পারে কি দু'দেশের অস্ত্র
প্রতিযোগিতা? তাঁর সাবধানী মন্তব্য,
সিয়াচেন নিয়ে দু'দেশের মধ্যে আগেও
আলোচনা হয়েছে। জওয়ানদের জন্য
বুলেটপ্রুফ পোশাক কেনার বিষয়ে
প্রণববাবু বলেন, “আলোচনা চলছে।
সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে কিছু সময় লাগবে।
প্রতিরক্ষা সরঞ্জাম তো সুপার মার্কেটের
পণ্য নয় যে, গেলাম আর কিনে নিয়ে
এলাম।” পশ্চিমবঙ্গে প্রতিরক্ষা সামগ্রী
উৎপাদন ও গবেষণার যে-সুযোগ
আছে, তিনি তা খতিয়ে দেখবেন বলে
জানান। কার্গিল বা সিয়াচেনের মতো
উচ্চতায় জওয়ানদের ব্যবহার্য বিভিন্ন
জিনিস, বৈদ্যুতিন সামগ্রী-সহ অনেক
কিছু নিয়েই এ রাজ্যে গবেষণার
সম্ভাবনা আছে বলে মনে করেন তিনি।
ডিফেন্স রিসার্চ ডেভেলপমেন্ট
অর্গানাইজেশনের কর্তাদের সঙ্গে এ
ব্যাপারে তাঁর প্রাথমিক কথা হয়েছে।

তবে এ দিন অর্থনীতি নিয়েই প্রায়
পুরো সময় ব্যয় করেন প্রণববাবু।
প্রত্যন্ত এলাকায় ফৌজি অফিসারদের
সঙ্গে কিছু দিন কাটিয়ে তিনি যে
হাঁপিয়ে উঠেছিলেন, নিজেই হাঙ্কা
চালে তা জানিয়ে দেন। অক্টোবরের
শেষ সপ্তাহে ব্যস্ত মরসুমের ঋণ নীতি
শুরু হলে মুদ্রাস্ফীতির চাপ কিছুটা
কমাতে পারে বলে প্রণববাবুর আশা।
তাঁর ধারণা, এ বার রবিশস্যের
উৎপাদন ভালই হবে।

প্রাক্তন অর্থমন্ত্রী বলেন, লগ্নি
টানতে এখন প্রধান কর্তব্য পরিকাঠামো
গড়া। এর প্রাথমিক দায়িত্ব সরকারের।
বেসরকারি লগ্নিকারী নিজেস্ব
পরিকাঠামো গড়বেন, এটা আশা করা
উচিত নয়। তবে সরকারি কর্মীদের
বেতন, অবসরপ্রাপ্তদের পেনশন ও
পুরনো ঋণের সুদ মেটাতেই যদি
বিভিন্ন রাজ্য সরকারের মোট রাজস্ব
আয়ের অধিকাংশ ব্যয় হয়ে যায়, তা
হলে পরিকাঠামো গড়ে লগ্নির উপযুক্ত
পরিবেশ গড়ে তোলা যে প্রায় অসম্ভব,
তা মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছেন প্রণববাবু।
তিনি বলেন, আর্থিক শৃঙ্খলার কথা
মাথায় না-রাখলে এমন দিনও আসতে
পারে, যখন সরকারের একমাত্র কাজ
হবে তার কর্মীদের বেতন দেওয়া।

ভারত চেম্বারের সভাপতি এন
আর গোয়েনকা প্রণববাবুকে এক কোটি
টাকা ঋণের একটি প্রতিশ্রুতির কথা
মনে করিয়ে দেন। কুলপিতে বণিকসভা
পরিচালিত কৃষি প্রকল্পে ওই অর্থ
অনুদান দিতে প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছিল
নরসিংহ রাও সরকার। তিনি এই নিয়ে
যোজনা কমিশনের ডেপুটি চেয়ারম্যান
মন্টেক সিংহ অহলুওয়ালিয়ার সঙ্গে
কথা বলবেন জানিয়েছেন প্রণববাবু।

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2004

DÉTENTE AS AN IMPERATIVE

THE HIGH-LEVEL AGREEMENT India and Pakistan reached in New York to press ahead with the process of détente in the spirit of the Islamabad joint statement of January 6, 2004 must be assessed as an excellent political outcome, given the scepticism and uncertainty, not to mention the to-ing and fro-ing, that are known to be endemic to the bilateral relationship. The core of the 'agreement' that resulted from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's September 24 meeting with President Pervez Musharraf on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly session is the decision to persevere with the fairly new track of "normalcy and cooperation" — as opposed to the old path of conflict, hostility, and mistrust — in India-Pakistan relations. Specifically, the two Governments have agreed to implement confidence-building measures (CBMs) of "all categories under discussion... keeping in mind practical possibilities"; to address the issue of Jammu and Kashmir with a view to exploring "possible options for a peaceful, negotiated settlement... in a sincere spirit and purposeful manner"; and to let the CBMs contribute to a trusting and peaceful environment at the people-to-people level. These are indeed the three substantive elements of the January 6 joint statement forged by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and President Musharraf.

One might have expected the Bharatiya Janata Party to claim original credit for what can, arguably, be termed a breakthrough in India-Pakistan relations. But that is not how oppositionism tends to approach current issues. The former External Affairs Minister and present BJP spokesman, Yashwant Sinha, has gone so far as to attack the September 24 joint statement for "diluting" India's traditional position of refusing to give "centrality" to the Jammu & Kashmir issue but treating it as "one of the issues... among many"; for leaving out the specific 'reassurance' given by Pakistan (in the January 6 joint statement) not to allow any territory under its control to be used for supporting terrorism in any manner; and for treating the possibility of a gas pipeline *via* Pakistan to India as a "stand alone issue" (instead of linking it with the demand that Pakistan extend the Most Favoured Nation treatment to India). Such negativism is not just short-sighted and petty, it seems to run directly against Indian popular sentiment, which clearly wishes the process of détente with Pakistan to be taken forward imaginatively and on an enduring basis.

There is nothing official India can possibly lose by engaging Pakistan straightforwardly on the question that has bedevilled the bilateral relationship for at least 57 years. It is hard to imagine any Indian government moving away from the internal consensus position of political India, which seems to have the strong support of the Indian people, that the only negotiated final solution to the Kashmir dispute with Pakistan is a solution that formalises and legalises the *status quo*, that is, the present territorial division along the Line of Control (with very minor changes where deemed unavoidable or mutually beneficial). Nothing else is within the realm of practical politics. This of course is to assume that war between two countries possessing nuclear weapons — as a 'continuation' of the policy of seeking territorial change 'by other means' — can be ruled out as too horrendous a prospect to contemplate. But since political Pakistan continues to reject out of hand any settlement on such a basis, the only reasonable Indian approach can be to engage its neighbour by asking what possible alternative solutions it has in mind and demonstrating an open-minded and friendly willingness to talk about them.

Ending cross-border terrorism must remain a high priority for India. This objective is to be realised not by going to war with Pakistan but by engaging intelligently with it, by building international pressure and appealing to reasonable

democratic constituencies within Pakistan, and by taking firm internal security steps to deal with extremism, terrorism, and infiltration from across the LoC. Prime Minister Singh has confirmed that he did raise this issue "unambiguously" with President Musharraf, pointing out that the "starting point of the whole dialogue" was the commitment given by Pakistan in the January 6 statement not to allow its territory, or territory under its control, to be used for terrorist purposes. In view of the Prime Minister's public clarification that the starting point remains "the precondition for moving forward," it is particularly churlish on the part of the main Opposition party in Parliament to argue that the absence of any specific mention of cross-border terrorism in the September 24 joint statement is a "dilution" of the official position and a negotiating "lapse... [that is] going to haunt us in the years to come."

Détente cannot be expected to go forward by waving conditionalities and ultimatums in the face of the other. The productive and progressive approach is to take all contentious issues on board, tackle the less difficult problems and get them out of the way, engage the ex-antagonist on the more complicated issues, and meanwhile let relations develop all round. This must be done in the areas of trade, investment, economic cooperation, cultural relations, sport — but above all people-to-people relations. The closing of the gap on the issue of the gas pipeline seems propitious. The unprecedented grant of Indian visas to 18 Pakistan journalists to visit important centres in the State of Jammu and Kashmir is a fine gesture that should help to improve the atmosphere. But the two sides would do well to centre-stage in the détente process not just the challenge of finding a solution to the Jammu and Kashmir issue and ending cross-border terrorism but also negotiating a way out of the nuclear standoff — through a bilateral agreement to de-induct, or not to induct, nuclear weapons and to avoid the installation of early warning systems that raise the risk of accidental nuclear war.

Analogies can sometimes be misleading. But the model provided by the turnaround in, and development of, Sino-Indian relations between 1976 and 2004 is educative and inspiring. The breakthrough formulation came in February 1979 during the visit of External Affairs Minister Vajpayee: it was the out-of-the-box suggestion made by the Chinese leader, Deng Xiaoping, that China and India, which had been apart for too long, should by all means try and resolve the boundary question; but if they could not, they should "set it to the side and go about improving relations all round." In 1979, mainstream political India was not ready for what appeared to be radical thinking about bilateral relations. In December 1988, after much water had flowed down the Ganga and the Yangste, came the breakthrough event: Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China and helmsman Deng's presentation of the same idea, in practically the same words. This time official India was ready and a breakthrough formula was found: bilateral relations would be normalised and developed without any conditionality while the boundary question would be addressed in a parallel process within the framework of an agreement that force would not be used to alter the *status quo*. India-China relations have flourished since then, with neither side regarding the absence of a settlement of the boundary question (a "problem left over by history," to quote Premier Zhou Enlai) an obstacle to normal, friendly and cooperative bilateral relations. Political statesmanship lies in pursuing much the same approach to India-Pakistan relations: all relevant issues can and must be taken up in the composite dialogue — but the process of normalisation and the development of all-round good neighbourly relations must go forward, without letting the outstanding issues remain roadblocks, not to mention landmines.

সিয়াচেন নিয়ে সমাধানসূত্র দিল্লি সেনাপ্রধানদের আলোচনায় রাজি

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

২৭ সেপ্টেম্বর: বিদেশ সচিব ও প্রতিরক্ষা সচিব পর্যায়ে বৈঠকের পরে ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের সেনাপ্রধানরাও দ্বিপাক্ষিক আলোচনায় বসবেন। এর আগে পাকিস্তান চাইলেও ভারত এই প্রস্তাবে রাজি হয়নি। অবশেষে ভারত সরকার দুই দেশের সেনাপ্রধান স্তরের আলোচনার প্রস্তাবে ছাড়পত্র দিয়েছে।

তাই সিয়াচেন ও নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা নিয়ে প্রতিরক্ষা সচিব স্তরের পাশাপাশি দু'দেশের সেনাপ্রধানরা দ্বিপাক্ষিক আলোচনা শুরু করবেন। আমেরিকায় প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের বৈঠকে সিয়াচেন নিয়ে জট ছাড়ানো সম্ভব হয়েছে বলে আশা করা হচ্ছে। সিয়াচেন নিয়ে যে সমাধানসূত্র তৈরি হয়েছে, সেটি হল সিয়াচেন থেকে ভারত সেনা প্রত্যাহার করে নেবে। অন্যদিকে পাকিস্তান ওই ভূখণ্ড দখলের কোনও চেষ্টা করবে না। তবে এটি ঠিক কীভাবে কার্যকর হবে তা চূড়ান্ত করার জন্য বিদেশসচিব পর্যায়ে বৈঠকের পাশাপাশি প্রতিরক্ষা সচিব পর্যায়ে বৈঠক হবে। আমেরিকায় এবার ভারত-পাকিস্তান নানা স্তরের আলোচনায় পারভেজ তাঁর পুরনো অবস্থান অনেকটাই নরম করেছেন বলে জানা গিয়েছে। এমনকী কাশ্মীর-কেন্দ্রিকতা ছেড়ে ভারতের দাবি মেনে অন্যান্য বিষয় নিয়েও আলোচনায় এখন রাজি মুশারফ।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী আজ রাতে দিল্লি ফিরেছেন। আগামী দু'একদিনের মধ্যেই মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটির বৈঠকে তিনি আমেরিকায় ভারত-পাকিস্তান আলোচনার ফলাফল সবিস্তারে জানাবেন। মনমোহন আগামিকাল সনিয়া গান্ধীর সঙ্গেও আলোচনায় বসবেন। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় কাল একদিনের জন্য কলকাতায় যাচ্ছেন। তাই বিমানবন্দরে প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে স্বাগত জানাতে গিয়েই বিষয়টি নিয়ে আলাদা করে কিছু কথা সেরেছেন। আপাতত ভারতের কৌশল, পাকিস্তান কী ভাবে প্রতিশ্রুতি রক্ষা করে তার দিকে নজর রাখা এবং প্রতিরক্ষা সচিব ও সেনাপ্রধানস্তরে আলোচনার নির্ধারিত স্থির করা।

পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের অগ্রগতির প্রশ্নে ভারত কোনওভাবেই তাড়াহুড়ো করতে চাইছে না। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় সূত্রে আজ এ কথা জানিয়ে বলা হয়েছে মার্কিন সফরেও প্রধানমন্ত্রী এবং তাঁর প্রতিনিধিদল পাকিস্তান নিয়ে কোনও নাটকীয় সিদ্ধান্ত ঘোষণার চেষ্টা করেননি। কিন্তু দুই দেশের মধ্যে কাশ্মীর নিয়ে আলোচনা অনেকটা এগিয়েছে বলে দাবি করা হচ্ছে। প্রথমত সিয়াচেন সমস্যার সমাধান হলে কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানের ক্ষেত্রে তা ভাল প্রভাব ফেলবে বলে ধারণা বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের। সিয়াচেন সমস্যার সমাধানকে সবচেয়ে বড় আত্মবর্ধক ব্যবস্থা হিসাবে বিবেচনা করা যেতে পারে। গত ৫ ও ৬ জুলাই দিল্লিতে

প্রতিরক্ষা সচিব পর্যায়ে বিস্তারিত আলোচনা হয়েছিল। এই বৈঠকে দিল্লি জানিয়ে দিয়েছিল, বেশ কয়েকটি শর্ত মানলে বিশ্বের সর্বোচ্চ যুদ্ধক্ষেত্র থেকে সেনা সরিয়ে দেওয়া হতে পারে। সিয়াচেন থেকে সেনা কমিয়ে '৭২ সালের অবস্থানে ফিরে আসতে দু'পক্ষই তখন আগ্রহী হয়েছিল। এখন নিউ ইয়র্কে শীর্ষ রাজনৈতিক স্তরের আলোচনায় পুরোপুরি সেনাপ্রত্যাহারের কথা আলোচিত হয়েছে। সেনা সরিয়ে নেওয়া হলে গোটা সিয়াচেন হিমবাহ এলাকাকে 'নো-ওয়ার জোন' হিসাবে চিহ্নিত করার প্রস্তাবও দিয়েছে নয়াদিল্লি।

সাত বছর পর ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের প্রতিরক্ষা সচিবেরা আলোচনা শুরু করেছেন। এবার সেনাপ্রধান স্তরে আলোচনা শুরু হলে তাও হবে ঐতিহাসিক এক পদক্ষেপ। এখন প্রত্যেক মঙ্গলবার ভারত ও পাক সামরিক অপারেশনের ডিরেক্টর জেনারেলরা হটলাইনে কথা বলেন। এবার দু'দেশের সেনাপ্রধান সীমান্ত নিয়ে আলোচনা শুরু করবেন।

মনমোহন-পারভেজ বৈঠকের পাশাপাশি জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা জে এন দীক্ষিতের সঙ্গে পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের রাজনৈতিক সচিব তারিক আজিজের বেশ কয়েকদফা বৈঠক হয়েছে। আমেরিকা সফরের আগেই একবার দিল্লিতে আর একবার দুবাইতে দু'জনে আলোচনায় বসেছিলেন। সিয়াচেন প্রসঙ্গ ছাড়া গুজরাতের কচ্ছ ও পাকিস্তানের সিন্ধু প্রদেশের মধ্যে বিভাজনকারী জলা এলাকা সারঞ্জিক নিয়েও আলোচনা হয়েছে। এই বিষয়েও পাকিস্তান অবস্থান অনেক নরম করে ফেলেছে বলে জানা গিয়েছে। কাশ্মীর ছাড়া অন্যান্য বিষয় নিয়ে সুসংহত আলোচনা চায় ভারত। এ ব্যাপারে পাকিস্তান আগে কট্টর মনোভাব নিত। তাদের অবস্থান ছিল কাশ্মীর আলোচনার নিষ্পত্তি হলে তবেই অন্য আলোচনা শুরু করা যাবে। সেই অবস্থান থেকেও পাকিস্তান অনেকটাই সরে এসেছে বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে। তবে নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখাকে আন্তর্জাতিক সীমান্ত হিসাবে মেনে নেওয়ার বিষয় নিয়ে আলোচনা হচ্ছে বলে 'টাইম' পত্রিকা যে সংবাদ পরিবেশন করেছে, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় তা খণ্ডন করেছে। বাজপেয়ীর আমলে ব্রিটেনের বিদেশমন্ত্রী জ্যাক স্ট্র প্রথম এই প্রস্তাবটি দিয়েছিলেন। তখন প্রস্তাবটি ঘরোয়া ভাবে ভারত মেনেও নেয়। কিন্তু পাকিস্তান মানেনি।

ব্যখ্যা চায় বিজেপি: 'সন্ত্রাসবাদ' আর 'সিয়াচেন' নিয়ে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের সঙ্গে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের ঠিক কী কথা হয়েছে জানতে চাইল বি জে পি। দলের সহসভাপতি মুখতার আব্বাস নাকভি বলেছেন, "এ ব্যাপারে পরস্পর বিরোধী কথা শোনা যাচ্ছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলছেন, সীমান্তপার সন্ত্রাস নিয়ে মুশারফের সঙ্গে কথা হয়েছে। মুশারফও বলেছেন, সিয়াচেন নিয়ে সুনির্দিষ্ট প্রস্তাব দিয়েছেন তিনি। কিন্তু যৌথ বিবৃতিতে এই সব বিষয়ে কোনও উচ্চবাচ্য নেই। এই অবস্থায় আমরা চাই ঠিক কী কথা হয়েছে প্রধানমন্ত্রী তা স্পষ্টাঙ্গী বলা।" এই খবর সংবাদসংস্থার।

India opens up Kashmir to Pakistan scribes

By Siddharth Varadarajan

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 26. Reversing India's long-standing policy of keeping Kashmir strictly off-limits for journalists from across the border, the United Progressive Alliance Government has issued visas for Jammu, Srinagar, Anantnag and Gulmarg to 18 Pakistani scribes.

The journalists, who are part of the South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA), will spend five days in Jammu and Kashmir and will be free to meet anyone they wish to during their stay. The unprecedented tour will begin on October 3 when the journalists enter India at Wagah and proceed to Jammu by road. They are scheduled to fly out of Srinagar on October 8.

Concrete expression

Senior officials say this will be the first-ever visit to the State by Pakistani journalists since 1948 and is a concrete expression of the glasnost New Delhi is seeking to introduce in its relations with Islamabad. "If somebody wants to write critical stuff, they're probably doing it sitting in Pakistan anyway," an official told *The Hindu* on Sunday. "Besides, all the information that is out there — on human rights,

for example — is what the Indian media itself is putting out."

Appointments for the Pakistani group in Srinagar have been fixed with the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, the Geelani and Ansari factions of the Hurriyat, Yasin Malik of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front and Shabir Shah of the Democratic Freedom Party.

In Jammu, the journalists will meet leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Panthers Party, besides the Congress and the Peoples' Democratic Party. Also scheduled is a visit to a refugee camp for Pandits forced to migrate from their homes in the Valley more than a decade ago. In Srinagar, it is possible the group will have the chance of interacting with representatives from the security forces.

The team includes two correspondents from Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The rest are leading personalities of the Pakistani media such as Rehana Hakim, editor of *Newsline*, Talat Hussain, anchorperson at ARY TV, Imtiaz Alam of SAFMA, Aamer Ahmed Khan, editor of *Herald*, Ejaz Haider of *Friday Times* and Marianna Babar and Nusrat Javed from *The News*.

Though Pakistani journalists have not had access to Jammu and Kashmir, the Government of India places no restriction on journalists from other countries visiting the State. On the Pakistani side, non-Indian foreign journalists may enter Pakistan-occupied Kashmir only if they have a no-objection certificate from the Interior Ministry. This restriction, however, does not apply to the Northern Areas.

Promptly approved

While the Union Home Ministry has in the past balked at suggestions that Pakistani journalists be allowed to visit Kashmir, officials say the SAFMA proposal was promptly approved by all agencies concerned, including the Jammu and Kashmir Government.

At the same time, they stress the upcoming visit is only one of a number of goodwill gestures India is making and that the opening up envisaged is broad-based rather than Kashmir-centric.

SAFMA hopes the Pakistani visit to Jammu and Kashmir will be followed up later this year by a similar visit to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and the Northern Areas by Indian journalists. Indian scribes have been allowed

into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir only very occasionally since 1964; the last visit was during the wedding of Amanullah Khan's daughter and the late Abdul Ghani Lone's son in 2000.

Indian officials say the decision on granting of visas was taken a few days before the meeting last week between the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, and was not linked to the New York talks in any way. Judged against the official policy of the past five decades, India's decision to open up Kashmir to the direct scrutiny of Pakistani journalists promises to be no less momentous a development.

Though the delegation has a busy schedule of meetings, some visiting journalists are bound to break away and interact with ordinary people. But officials are not worried that the "man on the street" may talk of 'azadi.' "We have nothing to hide," said a source.

Given the complexity of the situation in Kashmir, which does not lend itself to easy comprehension in one or two visits, the Government is considering the possibility of senior Pakistani journalists making more frequent visits to the State.

Terrorism issue did come up: Manmohan

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

NEW YORK, SEPT. 25. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, has described his meeting with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, as a "significant step forward" and one that was "historic in more than one way."

At a press conference here today, Dr. Singh said: "I think it is a significant step forward. In many ways it represents a new beginning. It commits our two countries to advance beyond what was agreed to in the January 6 statement both in terms of discussing confidence-building measures as well as moving to discuss complex issues relating to the State of Jammu and Kashmir."

Good commitment

"It is historic in more than one way. For the first time we have a statement which lists, which conveys our determination to move forward in a purposeful manner and resolve all outstanding issues ... the composite dialogue will be taken to its constructive conclusion. This is a good commitment," Dr. Singh said.

"We are committed to discuss all elements that figures in the composite dialogue. It is our hope and expectation that we will be making progress in all these matters," he said.

Dr. Singh fielded questions not only on his meeting with Gen. Musharraf, but also on his impressions of the Pakistan leader.

He spoke with sincerity

"I had a one-to-one meeting with President Musharraf and we had a frank and I would say it was an easy flow of conversation, never a dull moment ... he spoke with very great sincerity about his desire to improve relations between our two countries. And he also told me that he is grossly misunderstood in India and many other countries — that he is wrongly regarded as a unifocal person," Dr. Singh said adding that Gen. Musharraf said he wanted progress on all elements of the composite dialogue. "I said I entirely endorsed that. So I think we have made progress." The two lead-

ers did not get into any detailed discussions about nuclear weapons and on whether Pakistan would also agree to a "no first use" policy. Terrorism also came up at the meeting.

A pre-condition

"Yes, it did come up in our discussion. I mentioned unambiguously to President Musharraf that the starting point of the whole dialogue is the commitment given by Pakistan in the January 6 statement that Pakistan territory or territory under Pakistan's control will not be used for terrorist purposes. And if you read the statement today, there is a reference to the January 6 statement and therefore there should be no doubt about that. That is the pre-condition for moving forward," Dr. Singh said to a question on why cross-border terrorism was not mentioned in the Joint Statement.

"We cannot express confidence in these measures if terrorist acts are on the increase.

We cannot discuss any substantive issues on confidence-building measures if terrorist acts are not being controlled. I did raise the matter with the President. He recognised that," Dr. Singh said.

Asked if the options for resolving the Kashmir problem were discussed, he said they did not get into all those details. "President Musharraf mentioned that there are many options and I said we are willing to look at all those options with an open mind," Dr. Singh said.

The next stage would involve discussing what options were available and looking into the pros and cons of the various proposals. In a lighter vein, he was asked whether he would accept an invitation from Gen. Musharraf for a hot air balloon ride. "I don't know all the risks associated with it. But I will certainly consider it," Dr. Singh said amid laughter.

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'Here to sell India'

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

NEW YORK, SEPT. 25. "I am here certainly to sell India, explain to the rest of the world what India is doing. The rest of the world knows that the bulk of the resources for India's development have always been mobilised domestically and we will continue on those lines ... But at the margins there is scope to involve the world community in supporting our development. And as Prime Minister it is my duty and obligation that whenever I come abroad I should seek to promote India."

That was Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on the criticism in India that he was behaving like a "salesman" during this visit. He was addressing a press conference here today.

"...I don't see anything wrong in what I have said, what I have done that Jyoti Babu [former West Bengal Chief Minister] can take exception to. Before I came here I had a very good meeting with Jyoti

Babu, with Comrade Surjeet and Sitaram Yechury and I told them clearly that this is what I am going to say. I said to them I am going to tell the world community that India needs foreign direct investment and we will seek to create in our country a climate, an atmosphere, an environment conducive to greater flow of direct investments. And on that there was complete agreement between us ... as I said the common minimum programme language is reflective of where the coalition partners stand on this," Dr. Singh said.

He expressed the hope that when Parliament reconvened, "what happened in the past is a chapter that can be considered closed. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha, in cooperation with the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha has convened a meeting of all political parties on the 8th of November and I do sincerely hope that all these matters will be sorted out at that meeting ... We look forward to a smooth functioning of our parliament the next time Parliament is convened."

India, Pakistan to explore possible options on Kashmir

By Harish Khare

NEW YORK, SEPT. 24. After an hour-long meeting between the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, India and Pakistan said today that they had agreed to strive "to restore normalcy and cooperation" in the spirit of the January 6, 2004 statement signed by the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, with Gen. Musharraf in Islamabad. Dr. Singh described the meeting as a successful "essay in mutual comprehension" and called it a "historic day."

The declaration came at an unscripted joint press appearance at Hotel Roosevelt, where Gen. Musharraf was staying. Dressed in a grey suit, the General stood next to a relaxed Dr. Singh as he read out what he called "an agreement."

'An honour'

Gen. Musharraf said that Dr. Singh had done him an "honour" by letting him read out the statement and observed that this "augurs well for India-Pakistan relations."

The relaxed tone was set at the very beginning by Gen. Musharraf who presented Dr. Singh a painting of the school in "Gah" village (now in Pakistan), where Dr. Singh had his initial schooling.

On his part, the Prime Minister recited two Urdu couplets which he had read out to Gen. Musharraf when he had telephoned to congratulate Dr. Singh on assuming the office of Prime Minister. The thrust of the couplets was that it was incumbent upon the two leaders to seize the historic moment to

bring peace to the region. At the outset, Dr. Singh assured the General that he remained personally committed to the dialogue process.

The operational part of the statement read: "They [the two principals] agreed that confidence-building measures [CBMs] of all categories under discussion between the two Governments should be implemented keeping in mind practical possibilities. They also addressed the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and agreed that possible options for a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the issue should be explored in a sincere spirit and purposeful manner. In the spirit of the Islamabad joint press statement of January 6, 2004, they agreed that CBMs will contribute to generating an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding so necessary for the well-being of the peoples of both countries."

The two leaders appeared quite relaxed, suggesting that the interaction, which included a one-on-one between them, had gone on rather well. The

original idea was that they would meet for 15 minutes before the delegations joined them; however, it appears that the two leaders hit it off rather well and their interaction got extended to an hour-long "essay in mutual comprehension."

According to an Indian official, the meeting can be said to "mark a significant step forward".

Gas pipeline project

Though the joint statement is full of generalities, it does reveal a willingness on the part of both sides not to remain stuck in the traditionally-stated positions. The two leaders also reiterated positively "the possibility of a gas pipeline via Pakistan to India," the position that was sorted out by the Indian and Pakistani Foreign Ministers when they met a few weeks earlier in New Delhi. It was agreed upon in New Delhi that the Energy Ministers would meet.

There is no mention in the joint statement of terrorism and cross-border terrorism, though the January 2004 statement is mentioned. Underlined, though

unstated, was Pakistan's commitment in January 2004 (not to allow the Pakistani-controlled territory to be used for terror activities). The Indian officials insisted that India was "not moving away from" the stated insistence that cross-border terror business should stop.

Officials said the two leaders discussed the Jammu and Kashmir problem in all its "dimensions" and it was natural to infer that the question of cross-border terrorism must have figured in the talks. On its part, Pakistan settled for a rather innocuous mention of "the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and agreed that possible options for a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the issue should be explored in a sincere spirit and purposeful manner." There was no mention of any time-bound urgency that Pakistani leaders have been insisting on.

CBMs discussed

The Indian officials also refused to answer whether the question of converting the Line of Control into a "a soft border" figured in the talks; all that they would say was that the two leaders discussed "a whole range of confidence-building measures, including [a] freer movement across the two sides," in the hope that such a step would permit the "natural affinity" between the people of India and Pakistan.

Having struck a warm personal rapport, the leaders invited each other to visit their countries and both accepted the invitations with "pleasure."

Editorial on PM's speech:

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'Time to heal wounds':

Page 13

Keeping scores

By Harish Khare

NEW YORK, SEPT. 24. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, had apparently come prepared to unleash a charm offensive on the Prime Minister.

Not only did he give his Indian counterpart a painting of the school (now in a village in Pakistan) in which the future prime minister studied, he had

another piece of memorabilia for Manmohan Singh.

Gen. Musharraf presented Dr. Singh a copy of his "marksheet," showing the marks secured by the young Manmohan in various subjects.

Gen. Musharraf pointed out that while Dr. Singh had scored impressively in all subjects, he himself (the General) had scored higher in mathematics.

THE HINDU

25 SEP 2004

Shila
Pakistani

১৯

ঐতিহাসিক দিন, বলশেন মনমোহন

প্রথম পাতার পর
অদলবদল করে সমাধান
প্রস্তাবও পাকিস্তান মানতে রাজি নয়।
আজকের বৈঠকে অবশ্য এ সব
'অগ্রীমিতিক' প্রসঙ্গ দুই নেতাই সংক্ষেপে
এড়িয়ে গিয়েছেন। বরং এত দিনের
তিন্তে সম্পর্কের ক্ষতে প্রলেপ দিতে
তারা এখন অর্থনৈতিক-বাণিজ্যিক
লেনদেন বাড়ানোর রাস্তাতেই পা
ফেলতে চাইছেন।

বৈঠকের আগের দিনই এই প্রসঙ্গে
মুশারফ তার মনোভাব স্পষ্ট করে
বলেছেন, দু'দেশেরই বিস্তার ক্ষতি
হয়েছে। এ বার যখন সেই
ক্ষতিপূরণের সুযোগ পাওয়া গিয়েছে
তা হাতছাড়া করা উচিত হবে না। যৌথ
বিবৃতিতে সেই আশা ব্যক্ত করে বলা
হয়েছে, আলোচনা জতন্তু ইতিবাচক
মনোভাব নিয়েই এগিয়েছে। গত
জানুয়ারি মাসে ইসলামাবাদে দু'দেশের
আলোচনার শুরুর পরে যৌথ
বিবৃতিতে যে সব আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থার
কথা বলা হয়েছিল, শান্তিপূর্ণভাবে
এগিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়ার জন্য দুই নেতাই
তা উল্লেখ করেন।

যে বৈঠককে ঘিরে ভারত ও
পাকিস্তানের কোটি কোটি মানুষের
আগ্রহ, তার জন্য দু'দেশের
সাংবাদিকদের বিশাল বাহিনী এখানে
হাজির। বৈঠকের পরে দুই নেতা
তাদের সামনে হাজির হলে মনমোহন
বলেন, "আজ একটি ঐতিহাসিক দিন
বলে আমি সত্যিই বিশ্বাস করি। এত
দিনের মতবিরোধ সত্ত্বেও আমরা এ
বার একটা নতুন অধ্যায়ের সূচনা
করাছি।" মুশারফ তখন হাসিমুখে
দাঁড়িয়ে। জানুয়ারির যৌথ বিবৃতিতে
তবু সন্তাসবাদের প্রেক্ষিতে 'হিংসা ও
শত্রুতার' অবসান ঘটানোর কথা বলা
হয়েছিল। এ বার সেই শব্দগুলিও
সময়ে পরিহার করা হয়েছে।
বৈঠকের আগে মুশারফ
জানিয়েছিলেন, তিনি কোনও নির্দিষ্ট
প্রস্তাব নিয়ে যাচ্ছেন না। দু'দিন আগে

সম্রাসের প্রসঙ্গ আদৌ উঠল না

সীমা সিরোহি • নিউ ইয়র্ক

২৪ সেক্টর: সংঘর্ষের পথ
থেকে সরে এসে ভারত ও পাকিস্তান
এখন কাশ্মীর সমস্যার শান্তিপূর্ণ সমাধান
খোঁজার প্রয়াসে সব রকম সম্ভাবনা
খতিয়ে দেখতে আগ্রহী। সে জন্য দুই
দেশ একসাথে চেষ্টা চালানোর বলে
জানিয়েছে। আজ এখানে প্রধানমন্ত্রী
মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে পাক
প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের
বৈঠকের পরে দু'দেশের তরফে যৌথ
স্বাভাবিক করার লক্ষ্যে দ্বিপাক্ষিক
আলোচনা চালিয়ে যাওয়ার উপর জোর
দিয়েছেন। পরে মনমোহন বলেন,
দু'দেশের সম্পর্কে এক নতুন অধ্যায়
শুরু হতে চলেছে। সে দিক থেকে
'আজকের দিনটি অবশ্যই ঐতিহাসিক
দিন হয়ে থাকবে।' মুশারফও একই
বৈঠক আগামী দিনে দু'দেশের মধ্যে
সুসম্পর্ক গড়ে তুলতে সাহায্য করবে।"

কূটনৈতিক শিল্পিচার মেনেই এ দিন
বৈঠক করতে মনমোহন গিয়েছিলেন
পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট যেখানে উঠেছেন সেই
কক্ষেই বসে বসে। দুই রাষ্ট্রপ্রধানের



উষ্ণতা, আন্তরিকতার মুহূর্ত। মনমোহন ও মুশারফ, শুরুর নিউ ইয়র্কে শীর্ষ বৈঠকের আগে। -- পি. টি. আই

এটাই ছিল প্রথম বৈঠক। তারা প্রায়
এক ঘণ্টা একান্তে কথা বলেন।
আলোচনায় আন্তরিকতার সুর জানতে
উর্দু ও হিন্দুস্তানি ভাষায় কথা বলেন।
তারা দুই নেতাই একমত, দু'দেশের
সম্পর্কের উন্নতি ঘটাতে অস্বিলম্বে সব
আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থাগুলিই কার্যকর করতে
হবে। এর মধ্যে দু'দেশের বাণিজ্যবৃদ্ধির
দিকে পাইপলাইন কমানোর যে প্রস্তাব
দীর্ঘ দিন ইসলামাবাদের আপত্তিতে
বুলে রয়েছে, সেটা নিয়ে যোনামেনা
কথা হয়েছে। দু'দেশই মনে করছে, এই
পাইপলাইন তৈরি হলে দু'দেশের
মনিফাই লাভবান হবে। বাণিজ্যিক ও
আর্থিক সম্পর্ক দৃঢ় করার যে কথা বলা
হচ্ছে, গ্যাস পাইপলাইন সেই লক্ষ্য
পূরণে রয়েছে, সেটা নিয়ে যোনামেনা
কথা হয়েছে। দু'দেশই মনে করছে, এই

আরও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ এই জন্য যে, এত দিন
কাশ্মীরকেই আলোচনার কেন্দ্রবিন্দু
করতে জেদ ধরে এলেও এ বারই তা
থেকে সরে বাণিজ্যিক লেনদেন ও অন্য
বিষয়ে আগ্রহ দেখাল পাকিস্তান।
বৈঠকের পরে সাংবাদিকদের
সামনে যৌথ বিবৃতি পড়ে শোনান
মুশারফ। মনমোহনকে পাশে নিয়েই
তিনি বলেন, তাঁকে এই সম্মান দেওয়ার
জন্য তিনি ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে
কৃতজ্ঞা মনমোহনও মানে করিয়ে দেন,
দিল্লি থেকে রওনা হওয়ার আগে তাঁর
কাছে জানতে চাওয়া হয়েছিল, এই
বৈঠক থেকে তিনি কী আশা করেন।
তিনি তখনই জানিয়েছিলেন, তাঁর
পরম্পরকে জানা ও বোঝার সুযোগ
করবে। সৌহারদের এই সুর বৈঠকের
মাগাগোড়া বজায় ছিল। রুজভেল্ট
হোটেলের এসে মনমোহন হাসিমুখে
মুশারফের সঙ্গে হাত মেলাল। দু'জনে
আলোকচিত্রীদের সামনে দাঁড়ান। তার
পর বৈঠকের শুরুতেই মুশারফ
মনমোহনকে তাঁর ছেড়ে আসা গ্রামের
স্কুল ও পরিচিত গ্রামবাসীদের ছবি
উপহার দিয়ে রীতিমতো আত্মতৃপ্ত করে
দেন। উল্লেখ্য, দেশভাগের কারণে
ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রীর জন্মভিটে
পাকিস্তানে, মুশারফের জন্ম দিল্লিতে।
দু'দিন আগে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের সাধারণ
সভার অধিবেশনে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট যে
সুরে ভারতের সঙ্গে মৈত্রীর সম্পর্ক
গভীর কথা বলেছিলেন, আজকের
বৈঠকেও সেই সুরই বজায় ছিল।
সন্তাসবাদের বিপদকে ঘিরে, বিশেষ
করে সীমান্তের ও পার-থেকে জঙ্গিদের
মত দেওয়ার প্রসঙ্গে ঘিরে ভারত
পাকিস্তানের পক্ষে এত দিন উগ্রতার
অভিযোগ তুলে এসেছে। আর
কাশ্মীরের মানুষের 'স্বাধীনতার লড়াই'
বলে পাকিস্তান তা উড়িয়ে দিয়েছে।
এমন কী নিয়ন্ত্রণ রেখার সামান্য
এর পর দেশের পাঠ্য

INDIA, PAKISTAN AGREE ON NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF KASHMIR

No terror talk at first meeting

Nilova Roy Chaudhury
in New York

Sept. 24. — Dr Manmohan Singh and General Pervez Musharraf's "essay in mutual comprehension" appeared to have succeeded in ensuring that the India-Pakistan peace process is well on track. More than several prickly edges were smoothed out in the joint statement issued at the conclusion of the meeting.

At the end of an hour of the one-on-one meeting between the Prime Minister and the Pakistani President, there was no mention of the "T" word (terrorism) from India, and, on J&K, General Musharraf, reading from the text of the statement, said, they had "agreed that possible options for a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the issue should be explored in a sincere spirit and purposeful manner".

Officials were upbeat, saying that the one-on-one part of the meeting continued well beyond the 15 minutes given and lasted over one hour, without note takers. The delegations met at the start of the meeting

for barely 10 minutes, they said. "Both leaders reiterated their commitment to continue the bilateral dialogue to restore normalcy and cooperation between India and Pakistan," the statement read.

When the Pakistani President and the Prime Minister, in a sudden departure from the previously announced schedule, emerged together before the waiting media, it was clear something significant had occurred. There was none of the usual mention of violence and cross-border terrorism, nor was there any mention of bilateralism, but it was clear some "pragmatic flexibility" had occurred in oft-stated positions and the two countries decided to go ahead with what was achievable.

Officials, however, said the mention of the 6 January joint statement was enough to emphasise India's concern on terrorism. "The idea was not to place the other side on the mat," one of them said. That, and the fact that the two countries will "reciprocally and jointly" implement confidence building measures (CBMs) across the board, indicate

that the talks have created "confidence that we are in a position to deal with the challenges", an official said.

The meeting took place at Roosevelt Hotel, where the Pakistani President traditionally stays, because protocol demands that a Prime Minister calls on a President. And, General Musharraf said, Dr Singh "had graciously" asked him to read the joint statement. The gas pipeline from Iran was discussed, something that has not occurred at the summit level, ever, making it clear that, as India has been suggesting, there is a new effort to raise the stakes in each other's economies.

According to the brief joint statement: "The possibility of a gas pipeline via Pakistan to India was also discussed. It was felt that such a project could contribute to the welfare and prosperity of the people of both countries and should be considered in the larger context of expanding trade and economic relations between India and Pakistan."



FRIENDS ON THE SIDE: Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh greets General Pervez Musharraf before their meeting in New York on Friday. — PTI

Poetic encounter, page 5

Musharraf gifts memories, Singh *sher*

K.P. NAYAR

New York, Sept. 24: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh broke the ice with General Pervez Musharraf in an hour-long one-to-one meeting which was high on sentiment, but short on content.

Musharraf set the tone for what officials on both sides called a "wide-ranging and easy exchange" between the two leaders and paved the way for a "pleasant" meeting when he gifted Singh a painting of the Prime Minister's *alma mater* in Gah, now in Pakistan.

Musharraf also gave Singh a photocopy of a tattered copy of the Prime Minister's mark sheet from the school. The general told Singh that he had scored better than him in all subjects, except in mathematics.

Indian officials were completely taken by surprise by Musharraf's gesture: they had not prepared similar gifts for him.

So Singh decided to take matters into his own hands and made up for the lack of reciprocity by charming Musharraf with Urdu couplets (*sher*).

Singh opened their meeting, with delegations present on both sides, by recalling their telephone conversation soon after the Prime Minister was sworn into office in May.

Aa ki in tarikion se surkhi-an paida karen

Is zameen ki bastion se aasma paida karen,

Singh had recited to Musharraf at that time. Roughly translated, it meant those who are on the ground must strive to reach the sky.

The implication of the lines was that the two countries should strive to achieve

FROM THE PAST, A PRESENT FOR THE PM



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh receives a painting of his village Gah in Pakistan from President Pervez Musharraf during their meeting in New York on Friday. (PTI)

the high goals of peace and friendship.

Another couplet that Singh repeated today was:

Kuch atse bhi manzar hain tariq ki nazron mein

Lamhon ne khata ki, sadiy-

on ne saza paayi.

It meant that because of mistakes of a few moments in history, centuries have suffered.

The Prime Minister told his aides after his hour-long

tete-a-tete with Musharraf — when even the usual note-takers were not present — that he was extremely pleased with the meeting.

The general was not only very polite, courteous and

friendly, he also did not say one word that struck a discordant note at their meeting.

In a nutshell, Singh came away from the meeting at Roosevelt Hotel, where Musharraf is staying, with the clear im-

pression that the two men could do business in future.

It was clear, though, from a joint statement issued at the end of their meeting that beyond pious hopes, there was not much progress on any substantive issue that bedevilled Indo-Pakistan relations.

The statement said Singh and Musharraf agreed that "confidence building measures (CBMs) of all categories under discussion between the two governments should be implemented keeping in mind practical possibilities".

It was also clear from the joint statement that both sides wanted to present a front which suggested that the Indo-Pakistan talks were making incremental progress.

"The possibility of a gas pipeline via Pakistan to India was also discussed," it said. "It was felt that such a project could contribute to the welfare and prosperity of the people of both countries and should be considered in the larger context of expanding trade and economic relations between India and Pakistan."

Indian officials later explained that what it meant was that this is a project which could be looked at in the light of regional prosperity when there was enough mutual confidence between India and Pakistan to pursue such projects.

The meeting agreed on a timetable for future exchanges. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz will visit India next month while Singh and Musharraf will meet in Dhaka for the Saarc summit soon thereafter.

Musharraf invited Singh to visit Pakistan and vice versa. Both the invitations were accepted and dates for visits are to be worked out through diplomatic channels.

We have given bilateralism a final chance: Musharraf

● 'Resolution of Kashmir issue cannot be inordinately delayed'

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

UNITED NATIONS, SEPT. 22. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, has said that "after several aborted attempts, Pakistan and India have been able to initiate confidence-building measures (CBMs) and a composite dialogue this year to address all outstanding issues. Pakistan has pursued this process with complete sincerity, giving bilateralism a final chance."

In his address to the United Nations General Assembly here this morning, he said: "We feel that the dual channels of CBMs and the dialogue process must proceed in tandem. We are also firmly committed to resolving all disputes with India peacefully, including the Kashmir dispute. This cannot be ignored. Its resolution cannot be inordinately delayed. We desire a resolution of Kashmir which is just and acceptable to India, Pakistan and the people of Kashmir."

Gen. Musharraf noted that

Pakistan also sought "strategic stability" with India.

"I am glad to say ... that uptill now the normalisation process has progressed well, in a cordial atmosphere. Now that the negotiations are entering the difficult stage of grappling with solutions to previously irreconcilable disputes, Pakistan hopes that India shows the same sincerity, flexibility and boldness that Pakistan will demonstrate," he said.

'Moment for peace'

"I look forward to my meeting day after tomorrow with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. I would like to convey to him that this is the moment for peace — we must not allow it to slip away," Gen. Musharraf said.

It had always been his conviction that Pakistan and India could resolve differences "including over Jammu and Kashmir" through a sincere dialogue; and that the dangerous confrontation of 2002 and three

wars prior to this had demonstrated that there was "no military solution" to the problem.

"The aspiration for peace enjoys popular support in Pakistan and, I also believe, in India. Neither country can achieve its ambition for social and economic progress in the absence of peace. We must achieve peace for the sake of the impoverished people of South Asia — for their development and for their prosperity," Gen. Musharraf said.

U.N. reform

He touched on the issue of the reform of the United Nations Security Council which, in his view, should become more effective, democratic and representative. But without mentioning any country by name, Gen. Musharraf addressed the issue of the expansion of the Security Council.

"There is no agreement on the aspiration of a few states to acquire permanent member-

ship of the Security Council. The overwhelming majority of the states are against the creation of new centres of privilege. The Council should be enlarged to ensure the representation of the mostly small and medium states which have joined the United Nations over the last three decades. We have to consider new ideas to craft a consensus on the enlargement of elected members on the Security Council."

Gen. Musharraf referred to many areas of the challenges faced by the international community, including terrorism, economic disparity and the continuing tragedy of Palestine. "Too many fronts have been opened, too many battlelines drawn. The time for closing fronts has come. The world today is crying for peace, reconciliation and reform. Our objective today has to be harmony through reconciliation and accommodation, globally and regionally," Gen. Musharraf said.

রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ কাশ্মীর নয়, পাকিস্তানকে চাপ দিল্লির

সীমা সিরোহি • নিউ ইয়র্ক

২১ সেপ্টেম্বর: কোনও বুকি নিচ্ছেন না ভারতীয় কূটনীতিকেরা। গত বছরের মতো রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের এ বারের অধিবেশনেও আপত্তিজনক ভাবে কাশ্মীর-প্রসঙ্গ তুলে পাকিস্তান যাতে আসর গরম করতে না-পারে, সেটা নিশ্চিত করতে আগেই আসরে নেমে পড়েছেন তারা।

ঘনিষ্ঠ মহল এবং রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের পাক কূটনীতিকদের মাধ্যমে এই 'কূটনৈতিক সৈনিকেরা' (অর্থাৎ রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জে যাঁরা পাকাপাকি ভাবে ভারতের প্রতিনিধিত্ব করছেন) ইসলামাবাদের জন্য পরিষ্কার বার্তা পাঠাচ্ছেন যে, এ বারেও রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ যদি কাশ্মীর-প্রসঙ্গ দুটুকটু ভাবে তোলেন, তবে তাঁরা শুক্রবার মনমোহন-মুশারফ দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকের আশা ত্যাগ করুক। এখনও পর্যন্ত ভারতের তরফে এই সতর্কবাণীতে কাজ হয়েছে বটে, কিন্তু যে হেতু কাশ্মীর এবং যে হেতু পাকিস্তান— তাই না-আঁচালে বিশ্বাস করার কারণ দেখছে না ভারতীয় কূটনৈতিক মহল।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সফরসঙ্গী এক পদস্থ কর্তা বলছিলেন, গত বছরের তিক্ত অভিজ্ঞতা ভারতকে এ বার মরিয়া করে তুলেছে। মুশারফ গত বছর রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জে কাশ্মীর তুলতেই অস্বস্তি শুরু হয় এবং ভারত-পাক আস্থা বর্ধনে তৎকালীন প্রধানমন্ত্রী বাজপেয়ীর শ্রীমগর ঘোষণার মতো যাবতীয় প্রচেষ্টা মাঠে মারা যাওয়ার উপক্রম হয়। মনমোহনের 'মিডিয়া ম্যানেজার'রা কাশ্মীর ও মুশারফ, দুটো সমস্যাকেই নিয়ন্ত্রণে রাখতে দিব্যরাত্রি পরিশ্রম করছেন।

এবং বোঝা যাচ্ছে, মুশারফ এই ইঙ্গিত বুঝছেন। ইসলামাবাদ ছাড়ার আগে এবং নিউ ইয়র্ক পৌঁছে পাক সাংবাদিকদের মুশরফ বলেছেন, কাশ্মীর-সমস্যার সমাধানে কোনও সময়সীমা নির্ধারণে তিনি জোর দিচ্ছেন না। পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের কথায়, "এই ব্যাপারে কোনও সময়সীমা হতে পারে না। আমি সে কথা বলছিও না। আমরা আশা করছি, দু'দেশের আলোচনায় গতি আসবে। ভারত-পাক সম্পর্কেরও ভাল রকম উন্নতি হবে।"

মুশারফের কথা: ভরসা পেলেও ভারতীয় কূটনীতিকেরা সতর্ক। তাই কাশ্মীর-কাঁটার জবাবে নিজেদের অস্ত্রে শান দিয়ে রাখছেন। তাঁরা দ্রুত নিতে চান, মুশারফ কী ভাবে কাশ্মীরকে 'পেশ' করেন। মুশারফ ভারত-পাক সম্পর্কের ক্ষেত্রে কাশ্মীরকেই 'কেন্দ্রীয় বিষয়' বলেন, না কি অন্যতম বিষয় বলেন— দেখে উপযুক্ত জবাব ঠিক করবেন তাঁরা। রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের অধিবেশন সূচি থেকেও সুবিধা ভারত পাচ্ছে। মনমোহনের বক্তৃতার এক দিন আগে মুশারফ বলবেন, ফলে

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জে কাশ্মীর নয়

প্রথম পাতার পর *শ্রীমতী*
নিজেদের বক্তব্য প্রয়োজনে ঘষামাজা করার জন্য একটা দিন ভারত পাচ্ছে। অধিবেশনের আগেই অবশ্য এক প্রস্তুতি বিতর্ক হয়েছে। ভারতের এক পদস্থ কর্তা 'টাইম' পত্রিকাকে বলেন, নিয়ন্ত্রণের খাকে পূর্ব দিকে মাইল কয়েক সরাসরে ভারতের আপত্তি নেই। এমন 'বক্তব্য' প্রকাশিত হয়েছে শুনে বিমানে বসেই ওই বক্তব্য অস্বীকার করে বিবৃতি তৈরি করতে হয় মনমোহনকে। কাশ্মীর নিয়ে ভারতের বুকি না-নেওয়ার আরও একটা কারণ মূনির আক্রমণ। রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের এই পাক দূত যে কোনও আলোচনায় ভারত-পাক প্রসঙ্গ এলেই কাশ্মীরের কথা পাড়েন। এক ভারতীয় কূটনীতিকের মন্তব্য, "আক্রমণ নিশ্চয়ই মুশারফের বক্তৃতায় কাশ্মীর নিয়ে কিছু একটা গুঁজে দেওয়ার চেষ্টা করবেন।"

স্বভাবতই বুকি নিতে নারাজ ভারতীয় কূটনীতিকেরা।

ANANDA BAZAR PAPER

22 SEP 2004

Test of patience

5/11/04 Just keeping the dialogue going 15/9

For how long can New Delhi be expected to search for excuses or explanations to make light of intemperate, if not provocative, offerings from Pervez Musharraf? For it has become customary that just before high-level bilateral meetings he fires away like a loose cannon, and Indian leadership is asked to display patience and restraint lest a matching response derail talks. Musharraf's broadside is predictably matched the very next day by the newly-appointed prime minister. It happens too often to be accidental and is a ploy to try and put India on the defensive. But in taking that line before his first meeting with Dr Manmohan Singh in New York, Musharraf also raises the question whether there is a point at all in negotiations. His personal conduct has created complications before — only when in Islamabad does he tend to be graceful. There is little to be gained if lack of an "incident" were deemed to be a positive outcome of what's planned on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session. India's interlocutors must send out clear signals that a meeting for the sake of a meeting is plain useless.

Why should New Delhi make allowance for its being a meeting of army officers at which Musharraf insists Pakistan will not give up demands for Kashmir and recalls that wars have been fought on that score? It is worth reminding him that the outcome of the wars has not "delivered" Kashmir to his country, nor will future wars. As well as letting him know that there is little purpose to be served by holding talks when the echoes of his fulmination has not dissipated. Not that he has kept his promise of not allowing any tolerance for using a base for militancy across the LoC. In the other part of his address to the army the General warned of what might occur if the "west" did not see a change in Pakistan. Time he also factored in the consequences of India concluding that there is no improvement in his attitude toward resolving bilateral problems.

✓✓

“PAKISTAN MUST CORRECT ITS IMAGE”

Musharraf raises Kashmir pitch

1879

Ind. PM

5/1

SNS & Agencies

NEW DELHI, Sept. 12. — Far from implementing a “rhetoric restraint regime”, Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf has ratcheted up the rhetoric ahead of his meeting with Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting, vowing that Pakistan will never give up Kashmir.

Dr Singh and Gen. Musharraf are expected to meet on 22 September, the day the latter is due to address the General Assembly and a day ahead of Dr Singh’s own address to the UN session. The meeting, their first since Dr Singh became the Prime Minister, is likely to focus on mutual concerns that were reflected when the foreign ministers of the two countries met in New Delhi last week.

Reports indicate that given



‘We’ve fought wars over it’

the crucial nature of the meeting and the high level of expectation associated with a de facto India-Pakistan summit, the national security advisers, Mr Tariq Aziz and Mr JN Dixit, will meet a few days earlier to tone down the rhetoric and help remove all “prickliness”.

Reports from Islamabad said, Gen. Musharraf told a meeting of army officers in Quetta yesterday: “We will not give up Kashmir, we have fought wars over it.” He added: “Pakistan will have to ensure the interest of Kashmiris. I will

meet Manmohan Singh and tell him in unequivocal terms about our stand on the issue.”

That the General’s rhetoric was clearly directed at his domestic constituency was apparent from his next statements. There was a general apprehension in the world outside that whatever was happening in Afghanistan and Kashmir was originating from Pakistan, he said. Pakistan is also being accused of nuclear proliferation, the President said. Cautioning that Pakistan has to face serious consequences if it failed to correct its image, he said: “If the world is not satisfied with our explanation, we could be subjected to bombardment. The European community could withdraw trade concessions. Economic sanctions may also be imposed. Finally our nuclear capability could also come under attack. We have to dispel these negative impressions about our country.”

THE STATESMAN

13 SEP 2004

Pakistan will not give up Kashmir: Musharraf

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 12. Vowing that his country would never give up Kashmir, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, has said he would convey his country's stand to the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, in "unequivocal terms" at their meeting in New York later this month.

"We will not give up Kashmir, we have fought wars over it. Pakistan will have to ensure the interest of the Kashmiris. I will meet Manmohan Singh [on September 22] and tell him in unequivocal terms about our stand on the issue. We will not give up Kashmir," he told a meeting of Army officers and soldiers at a "Garrison Darbar" in Quetta yesterday.

'Negative impressions'

However, Gen. Musharraf said there was general apprehension in the outside world that whatever was happening in Afghanistan and Kashmir was originating from Pakistan. Pakistan is also being accused of nuclear proliferation, he said, adding Pakistanis are generally considered extremists devoid of tolerance.

"Wherever I go I am faced with these questions. I have been refuting their charges but they stick to their opinion about our people," he said.

Cautioning that Pakistan would face serious conse-

quences if it failed to correct its image, he said: "If the world is not satisfied with our explanation we could be subjected to bombardment. The European community could withdraw trade concessions on our textile industry from which the country earns Rs. 60 billion in foreign exchange through exports.

"It would result in closure of 50 per cent textile mills in the country. Economic sanctions may also be imposed and no country would trade with us. Finally our nuclear capability could also come under attack. We have to dispel these negative impressions about our country."

Troops to Iraq

About sending Pakistani troops to Iraq, he said the country would not send its soldiers under the prevailing conditions in that country, but would consider it when other countries, especially India send troops.

He said it would be unwise and against diplomacy to close all doors, especially when the Iraqi Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi himself had requested him for sending troops. The decision may be changed if circumstances changed and a conducive atmosphere created.

"If... India sends its troops to Iraq, it would not be wise for us

to stay away," Gen. Musharraf said. He also said Pakistan would not roll back its nuclear capability and added that during the past three to four years it spent more amount on improving these capabilities than in the past 30 years.

"Defence is the most important priority and all defence requirements would be met," he said, adding a strategy for the next 15 years had been chalked out to augment national defence.

"Our tanks are far better than those of the enemy. We will increase our mobility, communication, air defence and surveillance needs under this strategy. We have enough resources for the purpose. The two pillars of the country defence and economy are strong," he said.

Fugitive camps

Gen. Musharraf also claimed that fugitive camps to train militants existed in the Southwest Baluchistan Province and expressed his determination to set things right.

He said the recurring violence scared away foreign investors. "We want to invite investors to the country but they are afraid of law and order. The situation also affects the poor classes because they cannot get jobs if there is no investment." — PTI

Pakistan asks visiting Indian journalist to leave

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 10. Pakistan today asked an Indian journalist, Kanwar Sandhu, who was part of the entourage of the visiting Haryana Chief Minister, Om Parkash Chautala, to leave the country.

Pakistani authorities told Mr. Sandhu, Resident Editor of *Hindustan Times*, after he had checked in at a hotel in Lahore that he had "violated" immigration provisions and had to leave.

The Joint Secretary in the Pakistan Interior Ministry, Ms. Mustaq, told *The Hindu* that she was asked to "help" Mr. Sandhu. However, by the time she could establish contact with him Mr. Sandhu had left the country.

'Nothing negative'

"There was nothing negative about the grounds on which Mr. Sandhu was asked to leave. Blacklisting is done in cases where either there is a problem

with the passport or a violation of visa in the past. May be Mr. Sandhu overstayed during his last visit. It is not a reflection on the character of the person," she maintained.

The 42-member delegation led by Chautala includes provincial Ministers, politicians, government officials, journalists, and artists.

'Visa valid'

PTI reports:

Mr. Sandhu was among the three editors in the delegation headed for Gujranwala, the birthplace of Bhai Kanhaiya. He told PTI over phone from Amritsar: "I had checked into my hotel after a few formalities. However, the Pakistan authorities came to my hotel and asked me to leave the country citing that I had been backlisted for an alleged visa violation in 1991." He said he held a valid visa.

"I don't remember if I had done any visa violation," he

said, adding that he had visited Pakistan in 1990-91 and did a story for "my organisation" (*India Today* at that time) on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and had even travelled with the then Pakistan Prime Minister and interviewed him.

"They [Pakistan authorities] could have denied me a visa earlier ... when I had already landed up in a hotel, why did they decide not to allow me to be part of the Chautala-led delegation," he asked.

'Private visit'

Our Chandigarh Special Correspondent reports:

The Haryana Government tonight refused to comment on the "deportation" of Mr. Sandhu by the Pakistan authorities.

Sources in Chandigarh clarified that Mr. Chautala was only leading the delegation and all the members had gone to Pakistan in their private capacity after seeking the Central Government's approval.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2004

A PARADIGM SHIFT

ISLAMABAD'S DECISION TO move away from the long-hardened position that it would not develop a meaningful relationship with India until the Jammu and Kashmir issue is resolved must be heartily welcomed. As Pakistan's Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri explained in an interview with *The Hindu*, the leadership in his country has begun the process of "conditioning its public to a different level of relations" with its eastern neighbour. There is hope that the project to construct an oil pipeline from Iran to India will bring about such a change in attitude since it will confer immense benefit on the country of transit; the Petroleum Ministers of the two countries are likely to discuss the subject in the near future. As indicated in the joint statement issued at the end of the talks between Mr. Kasuri and Minister for External Affairs Natwar Singh, Islamabad is now willing to engage actively with New Delhi on matters such as the enhancement of people-to-people contacts and the expansion of trade. The two countries have decided to create a new category in the visa regime to facilitate trans-border tourism especially by groups. While the proposal for a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad has not made headway because of differences on the nature of the travel documents to be used by passengers, expert-level meetings are to be held to discuss all aspects of the matter. Pakistan is still hesitant to grant India the "most favoured nation" status because it insists the same benefits will accrue once the South Asia Free Trade Area is established. However, the two countries have decided to set up a committee of experts to discuss all trade-related matters.

While India and Pakistan have only begun to take the first steps towards building a new future, they have shown a commendable willing-

ness to deal urgently with some of the issues that have often brought them into conflict in the past. They have agreed to discuss further the modalities of disengaging and redeploying forces currently positioned in Siachen and to hold expert-level talks on confidence building measures *vis-à-vis* nuclear as well as conventional weapons. Even as they wound up the first phase of the revived composite dialogue, the two Foreign Ministers confirmed their faith in the process by outlining the schedule for the second phase that will begin with a Foreign Secretary-level meeting in December. A conscious effort was also made to tone down the rhetoric that the two countries usually resort to when they dwell on issues of special concern. Mr. Kasuri left no one in doubt that Pakistan continues to regard Jammu and Kashmir as a central issue. However, he explained that some strong statements from the Indian side provoked his half-hearted attempt to revive the now-defunct idea of a plebiscite and to get the Kashmiris included as a separate party to the negotiations. New Delhi has legitimate concerns about the infiltration of militants across the Line of Control and about Islamabad not living up to its promises to cut off assistance to terrorist groups. However, for the moment at least, India has been content with accepting Pakistan's reaffirmation of its earlier commitment.

The outcome of the first phase of the composite dialogue will reassure India that the contentious issues with Pakistan will be easier to handle once confidence is built between the people of the two countries. The paradigm shift that the establishment in Islamabad has embarked upon has clearly been influenced by the groundswell of opinion among its own people in favour of normalisation.

10 SEP 2004

THE HINDU

HD-1
9/9

Kasuri for joint working group on gas pipeline project

gandhi park

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 8. India, Iran and Pakistan should form a joint working group to discuss plans for an oil-gas pipeline running through the three countries, the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, said today.

In an interview to *The Hindu*, shortly before leaving for Lahore, Mr. Kasuri said he had made this proposal on involving Iran to India. The feedback from the Indian leadership had been positive.

In a somewhat defensive mode, he said: "The argument that we are using for our public, which is not accustomed to dealing with India, is that this pipeline is in Pakistan's interest. And, we are saying it's a stand alone project — it's not a reversal of our policy — we are still interested in Kashmir."

Claiming that Pakistan was conditioning its public to a different kind of relationship with India, Mr. Kasuri was hopeful that a meeting of Indian and Pakistani Petroleum Ministers on the pipeline would take place soon.

But what about having the pipeline as part of a package of improved economic relations? The "best thing," Mr. Kasuri said, was to ensure that politicians learned to move around



certain things when the objective was "clear."

Calculated departure

According to him, the pipeline proposal flew right in the face of Pakistan's old stand that there could be no meaningful relationship with India until the Kashmir issue was resolved. "It was thought that this was fundamental and could not be watered down," he said, adding that a calculated departure had been made from the previous position.

Admitting that Pakistan had problems in giving the Most Favoured Nation status to India, Mr. Kasuri felt that the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) was an "MFN plus" situation because tariffs would soon be pegged at zero to five per cent.

Mr. Kasuri said that India

had rejected a Pakistani suggestion to have Special Representatives discuss the Jammu and Kashmir issue during the current round of talks with his counterpart, Natwar Singh.

'Not dogmatic'

"They [the Indians] said we'll use the existing mechanism more purposefully or more effectively — something of that nature. Okay, we are prepared to give that a chance. We are not unreasonable, we are not dogmatic," he said, stressing that Pakistan didn't say that they would break off the dialogue if no Special Representatives were agreed upon to discuss Kashmir.

'Sending a signal back'

Asked why he issued a strong statement on Kashmir just before leaving for India, Mr. Kasuri said the All-India Congress Committee resolution and the reported statements of Mr. Singh had come before his visit. "So, our people analysed and said they were sending me a signal. And that I should send a signal back."

Referring to Monday's joint press conference, Mr. Kasuri said that Mr. Singh had spoken before he did.

After Mr. Singh spoke on his concerns about cross-border terrorism, he felt that he had to react and say what he did on Kashmir.

Complex issues

On why Pakistan was soft in dealing with Indian-related militancy involving persons such as Fazlur Rehman Khalil and Masood Azhar, he said this was an incorrect perception. "These are complex issues... we have to grow up as a modern, forward-looking nation with a different mindset, which is scientific in its orientation. This sort of mindset is destructive to having a strong Pakistan with a healthy, vibrant economy..."

What did he have to say to the fact that as *The Hindu's* correspondent in Pakistan, this writer had seen militants operating offices and collecting money? "I'm not saying that what you saw is what I saw... we wish to make it clear to all groups that no non-State actors will be tolerated."

Aziz to visit India

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 8. Agreeing to continue with high-level contacts, India and Pakistan announced today that apart from a meeting between the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, later this month in New York, the new Pakistan Premier, Shaukat Aziz, would visit India in his capacity as the Chairman of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

A joint statement issued by the two countries after the September 5-6 meetings between the External Affairs Ministers, Natwar Singh and

Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, also said that Dr. Singh would meet Mr. Aziz again on the margins of the SAARC summit in Dhaka in January 2005.

New visa category

The statement, much of which contained a reiteration of the points made by the two Foreign Ministers in their press interaction on Monday, formally confirmed that India and Pakistan had agreed to add a new "tourist" category in the visa regime between the two countries. Group tourism, too, would be promoted.

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Indo-Pak stress on composite talks

Statesman News Service



NEW DELHI, Sept. 8. — India and Pakistan have reiterated that only a composite dialogue process will lead to “peaceful settlement of bilateral issues, including J&K, to both sides’ satisfaction”.

And to signal a seriousness in sustaining the dialogue, a time-frame for forthcoming meetings has been outlined in the joint statement issued today after the just-concluded meeting between the Indian and Pakistani foreign ministers.

Round two of the process is to

Punjab vs Punjab

CHANDIGARH, Sept. 8. — Patiala will host “Punjab games” from 5 to 11 December to step up the bonhomie between the Indian and Pakistani Punjabs. The World Punjabi Conference will also be held in Patiala from 1 to 3 December. Chief minister of Pakistan’s Punjab Mr Parvez Ilahi is likely to inaugurate the games. — SNS

begin from December, when the foreign secretaries would meet to “discuss overall progress and subjects of peace and security including CBMs and J&K”.

The statement said the foreign ministers also agreed to implement the outcome of the defence secretaries’ meeting, indicating a move to put in place modalities for disengagement and redeployment of troops in Siachen.

A meeting is also scheduled on “all issues related to the commencement of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service”. Among a total of 13 CBMs agreed upon, a new category of tourist visa has been added to the visa regime, to promote group tourism, a category that was previously absent from bilateral exchanges.

Engaging Pakistan

By C. Raja Mohan

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THE RESULTS from the first round of the India-Pakistan engagement might not have been too many. But they have given a different direction to the relations between the two countries. Given the deep differences over Kashmir and terrorism — reiterated publicly after the talks in New Delhi between the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, and the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri — the process indeed remains fragile. Nevertheless, the prospects of expanding cooperation, including in new areas such as energy, suggest that the peace process is beginning to gain some traction despite the divide on Kashmir.

But the most important feature to emerge from the first round of the composite dialogue is the outline of a new Indian strategy towards Pakistan. If New Delhi can hold on to its basic elements and build on them, the new approach could lay the basis for a fundamental reorientation of the relationship with Islamabad.

The first element of the new strategy is the recognition by India of the need for a sustained engagement with Pakistan, irrespective of the many accumulated grievances in India, including the most recent ones on cross-border terrorism. To suggest that New Delhi must engage Islamabad in spite of the provocations might look like a weak-kneed policy. The policy will come under the charge that it will embolden the leadership in Pakistan to further intensify cross-border infiltration.

This criticism, however, misses the central point that Pakistan remains the biggest strategic challenge to India. Transforming the relationship with Islamabad is a responsibility that New Delhi cannot escape, come what may. Constant tactical innovation is necessary to achieve this strategic objective. But in arguing that it cannot engage Islamabad except under certain circumstances, New Delhi cedes its principal advantage — India looms large on Pakistan's state and society and what it does matters in a fundamental sense. In avoiding contact with Pakistan or making it too conditional, it is India that is forsaking its opportunities to change the relationship.

Secondly, India has begun to appreciate Pakistan's internal complexity. Thanks to the demonology that has been cultivated in India over the years, the tendency is to view Pakistan in simplistic terms. But Pakistan, like all large countries, is not a mono-

It would be unwise for New Delhi to assume, in the wake of the successful first round of talks with Pakistan, that it can delay or avoid engaging Islamabad on Kashmir.

lith. Its internal differences are real even when a seemingly powerful military figure such as Pervez Musharraf holds the reins. He can change Prime Ministers at will; and his authority over the political system appears complete. At the same time, Gen. Musharraf continues to struggle to achieve real legitimacy for the structures he has put in place. The political class is sullen and the question of his discarding the uniform does not go away. There is trouble brewing in Baluchistan. The situation in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is none too comforting. He is under great pressure from the United States to crack down on the very extremist forces that his armed forces have nurtured for the last two-and-a-half decades. The Pakistani Army had to undertake difficult military operations in south Waziristan and they have now been extended to north Waziristan. In acting to meet the demands from Washington on the Al-Qaeda, Gen. Musharraf has made himself a personal target of Islamic extremism in Pakistan.

It is one thing for India to argue, rightly, that Gen. Musharraf has not yet cracked down on Kashmir-related militant groups operating in Pakistan. But it is entirely another matter not to see the real box that Gen. Musharraf finds himself in and the unstable dynamics inside Pakistan. Having been trapped in a box, Gen. Musharraf has certainly been more forthcoming. It makes sense for India then to find ways to move forward on a whole range of issues at the present.

Thirdly, for the first time in decades, India has figured out the importance of pursuing a pro-active policy towards Pakistan. In the past, it was Pakistan that always came up with new proposals and it was India that disposed them. In contrast, India has now put 72 proposals on the table for expanded cooperation with Pakistan. These range from actions on nuclear stability to Jammu and Kashmir and people-to-people contact. It has been Pakistan's turn to be either reticent or reluctant. Holding the initiative is central to any military or diplomatic strategy. Having taken the high ground by unveiling a different vision of India-Pakistan relations,

New Delhi must now persist.

Fourthly, India has begun to see the value of acting unilaterally. No nation can completely set aside considerations of reciprocity in any negotiation. But when reciprocity becomes a mantra, as it had in India's dealings with its neighbours over the last few decades, it becomes a millstone on diplomacy. Reciprocity then meant allowing Pakistan to define the nature and scope of the bilateral relations. Opening India's doors, say, to group tourism for religious purposes, would make sense for revenue generation.

There is a whole range of areas in relation to economic cooperation and people-to-people contact where India can simply act unilaterally and change the dynamics on the ground. Having put up 72 proposals for negotiation, India must now demonstrate its good faith by acting on some of them unilaterally.

Fifthly, India has consciously or unconsciously begun to introduce a regional dimension to its policy towards Pakistan. The consequences are bound to be fascinating and unconventional. When it comes to large neighbours with long borders, it is unwise to treat diplomacy as an exclusive national activity. For far too long, India has treated engagement with Pakistan as taking positions and defending them to the death. So long as there was no real relationship on the ground, in terms of movement of goods and people across the border, this approach seemed to make some sense.

Given India's new emphasis on expanded people-to-people contact and greater trade relations, the time has come for it to involve its States neighbouring Pakistan — Punjab, Rajasthan, and Gujarat — in the proposed expansion of the bilateral relationship. India must also try and revive the historic ties between Mumbai and Karachi. (The contested terrain of Jammu and Kashmir is naturally in a different category.)

To some extent, the Indian proposals to open old trade routes between the two Punjabs, renew rail connectivity between Rajasthan and Sindh, ferry links between Mumbai

and Karachi, the offer of moving diesel from Jalandhar to Lahore and the agreement to have a "special day" bus service between Amritsar and Lahore to allow the movement of Sikh pilgrims across the border reflect the new approach.

But this must be just the beginning. As the appetite of the people is whetted for cross-border movement, India must be prepared to come up with ideas that are bold in the current context but which will be natural in terms of the longer history of the sub-continent. For example, leaders of the Sikh community are asking why only a "special day service" between Amritsar and Lahore. Why can there not be daily services between the two cities?

More important is to let the political establishments and civil societies across the border begin an intensive interaction. The Chief Minister of Punjab visited Lahore in January. A return visit by the Chief Minister of West Punjab is on the cards. New Delhi must also promote reciprocal visits between the political leaders of Sindh on the Pakistani side and Rajasthan and Gujarat on the Indian side. Even more important is the interaction between the local chambers of commerce and a whole range of institutions that have common interests in a shared region.

The "out of the box" thinking in relation to Pakistan that has been demanded by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has already begun to creep up on India's foreign policy. Where it is missing so far is in relation to Jammu and Kashmir. As the engagement with Pakistan takes shape at the highest level in the coming weeks and months, New Delhi must get its act together on Jammu and Kashmir. India will have to come up with creative approaches both on the internal and external dimensions of the Kashmir question.

India says it is prepared for a substantive negotiation on Kashmir with Pakistan. It would be unwise for New Delhi to assume, in the wake of the successful first round of talks with Pakistan, that it can delay or avoid engaging Islamabad on the subject. Such an attitude will only undermine India's promising new strategy towards Pakistan. A demonstration of India's commitment to improve the security and political conditions within the Valley and to negotiate purposefully on the subject with Pakistan are critical to sustaining the peace process and transforming the bilateral relationship.

Experts to handle trade-related issues

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 8. The Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and India, Natwar Singh and Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, have agreed to establish a "committee of experts" to consider trade-related issues while deciding to implement the outcome of the August meeting between Defence Secretaries on the Siachen issue, the joint statement issued after the September 5-6 meetings between the two Foreign Ministers said. (At the August meeting, India and Pakistan agreed to discuss further modalities for disengaging and redeploying troops in Siachen).

Other highlights of the statement include agreement on holding expert-level meetings on conventional and nuclear confidence-building measures (CBMs) and a meeting on "all issues" relating to the com-

mencement of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service.

'Satisfactory'

Expressing satisfaction at the progress in the composite dialogue, the Foreign Ministers "positively assessed" developments in bilateral relations over the past year. "Recalling the assurance contained in the joint press statement of January 6, 2004, [given by Pakistan on restricting terrorists from using its territory] they exchanged views on carrying the process forward in an atmosphere free from terrorism and violence."

"The Ministers held detailed and substantive discussions and reiterated the confidence that the composite dialogue will lead to peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, to the satisfaction of both sides. They agreed to continue with the se-

rious and sustained dialogue to find a negotiated peaceful settlement. They expressed their determination to take the process forward," the joint statement said.

At the outset, the statement had the countries reiterating their commitment to the "principles and purposes" of the United Nations' Charter and their determination to implement the Shimla Agreement in letter and spirit.

Pipeline issue

On the pipeline issue, the Ministers recognised the importance of availability and access to energy resources around South Asia. "The Ministers of Petroleum/Gas could meet to discuss the issue in its multifarious dimensions," it said.

"It was also agreed that the two Foreign Secretaries would meet in December 2004 to dis-

cuss overall progress as well as the subjects of peace and security, including CBMs, and Jammu and Kashmir in the composite dialogue.

"They would also work out the schedule of meetings on the other six subjects, i.e. Siachen; Wular barrage / Tulbul navigation project; Sir Creek; terrorism and drug trafficking, economic and commercial cooperation; and promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields..."

The joint statement was released today simultaneously in New Delhi and Islamabad. Its release was delayed as Mr. Kasuri spent an extra two days in the capital after concluding formal talks with Mr. Natwar Singh on September 6. Earlier, the Foreign Secretaries met in a preparatory session on September 4.

Mr. Kasuri returned to Pakistan this evening.

আস্থা বর্ধনে ভারত-পাক যৌথ বিবৃতি

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৮ সেপ্টেম্বর: কাশ্মীর ও সন্ত্রাসবাদ নিয়ে দুই দেশের মতবিরোধ একেবারে প্রকাশ্যে চলে এসেছিল মাত্র দু'দিন আগে। তা সত্ত্বেও ভারত ও পাকিস্তান মনে করছে, বর্তমানে যে 'সামগ্রিক আলোচনা' চলছে, তার মাধ্যমেই জম্মু ও কাশ্মীর-সহ বিভিন্ন দ্বিপাক্ষিক বিষয়ের সমাধান সম্ভব। পাক বিদেশমন্ত্রী খুরশিদ মহমুদ কাসুরির ভারত সফরের পরে আজ দু'পক্ষ যে যৌথ বিবৃতি জারি করেছে, তাতে মোট ১৩টি বিষয়ে আরও বিশ্বাসবর্ধক পদক্ষেপ করতে রাজি দুই দেশ। এর মধ্যে সিয়াচেন থেকে ফৌজ সরানো এবং শ্রীনগর-মুজফ্ফরাবাদ বাস পরিষেবা চালুর ব্যাপারে আলোচনা বজায় রাখার মতো বিষয় রয়েছে।

আলোচনা চালিয়ে যেতে দুই দেশের আগ্রহ বোঝাতে আজকের যৌথ বিবৃতিতেই প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে পাক নেতৃত্বের পরবর্তী তিনটি সাক্ষাতের নির্ধারিত প্রকাশ করে দেওয়া হয়েছে। নিউ ইয়র্কে এই মাসে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ এবং পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের বৈঠক হবে। তার পর পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী শৌকত আজিজ সার্কের চেয়ারম্যান হিসাবে ভারত সফরে আসবেন (সম্ভবত নভেম্বরে)। আগামী জানুয়ারি মাসে ঢাকাতেও দুই প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বৈঠক হবে।

কাশ্মীর-সহ সমস্ত বিষয়ে আলোচনায় বসে দুই দেশের বিদেশমন্ত্রীরা কোনও উন্নতির কথা শোনাতে পারেননি। উল্টে বৈঠকের পরে সন্ত্রাসবাদ এবং কাশ্মীর নিয়ে দু'পক্ষের চাপানউতোর প্রকাশ্যেই চলে এসেছিল। নয়াদিল্লি জানিয়েছিল, 'সীমান্তপারের সন্ত্রাস এখনও আমাদের কাছে বিশেষ দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির বিষয়।' পাল্টা জবাবে পাকিস্তানের বক্তব্য ছিল, 'কাশ্মীরে মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘনের মতো গুরুতর ঘটনা ঘটছে।' টেলিভিশনে এক সাক্ষাৎকারে কাসুরি কাশ্মীর সমস্যাকে যথেষ্ট 'জটিল' বলে উল্লেখ করেছেন। সরাসরি না বললেও, পাকিস্তানের পুরনো অবস্থান থেকে সরে না এসে আকারে-ইঙ্গিতে তিনি কোনও তৃতীয় পক্ষের মধ্যস্থতায় কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধানের প্রস্তাব দিয়েছেন। ১৯৭২ সালের শিমলা চুক্তিতে ভারত-পাক আলোচনার মাধ্যমে কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধানের কথা বলা হয়েছিল। সাংবাদিকেরা সেই কথা কাসুরিকে মনে করিয়ে দিলে তাঁর বক্তব্য ছিল, "দ্বিপাক্ষিক আলোচনাকে শিমলা চুক্তিতে গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হলেও সেখানে কাশ্মীরের আন্তর্জাতিক চরিত্রকে অস্বীকার করা হয়নি।"

দুই দেশের এই অবস্থানের পরে আজ জারি করা যৌথ বিবৃতিতে বলা হয়েছে, "সব বিষয়ে মন্ত্রীরা বিস্তারিত

এবং গঠনমূলক আলোচনা করেছেন।" আপাতত সন্ত্রাস ও কাশ্মীর নিয়ে দু'পক্ষ কঠোর অবস্থান গ্রহণ করলেও আশা প্রকাশ করা হয়েছে, সামগ্রিক আলোচনার মাধ্যমে জম্মু ও কাশ্মীর-সহ সমস্ত বিষয়ের শান্তিপূর্ণ সমাধান হবে। গত জানুয়ারিতে ভারত ও পাকিস্তান মোট আটটি বিষয়ে সামগ্রিক আলোচনা শুরু করিছিল।

মোট যে ১৩টি বিষয়ে বিশ্বাসবর্ধক পদক্ষেপের কথা বলা হয়েছে, তার মধ্যে অন্যতম, সিয়াচেনে সেনা কমান্ডার প্রস্তাব। অগস্ট মাসে দুই দেশের প্রতিরক্ষা সচিবদের মধ্যে এই নিয়ে কথা হয়েছিল। তখন ঠিক হয়, দুই দেশের সেনা কর্তারা এই নিয়ে নিজেদের মধ্যে আলোচনা চালাবেন। সংঘর্ষ-বিরতি আরম্ভের পরে সেনা-পরিভাষায় পরবর্তী প্রক্রিয়াকে দুই ভাগে ভাগ করা হয়েছে। প্রথমে 'ডিসএনগেজমেন্ট' অর্থাৎ এই সংঘর্ষবিরতিকে স্থায়ী রূপ দেওয়া। তারপর 'ডিমিলিটারাইজেশন', অর্থাৎ হিমবাহ থেকে সেনা পুরোপুরি সরিয়ে নেওয়া। আজ জানানো হয়েছে, এই লক্ষ্যে আলোচনা চালানো হবে। শ্রীনগর-মুজফ্ফরাবাদ মধ্যে বাস পরিষেবা চালুর ক্ষেত্রে পাকিস্তানের বেশি কিছু শর্ত দিয়েছে যা ভারত এ যাবৎ মানেনি। এখন ঠিক হয়েছে, সব বিষয় নিয়ে ফের বৈঠকে বসা হবে। এ

ছাড়া পর্যটকেরদের ১৪ দিনের বিশেষ ভিসা দেওয়া, ধর্মীয় স্থানে যাওয়ার বাড়তি সুবিধা, ঐতিহাসিক সৌধের রক্ষণাবেক্ষণের মতো বিষয়গুলি নিয়েও সিদ্ধান্ত হয়েছে।

অন্যান্য পদক্ষেপের মধ্যে নটবর আগেই জানিয়েছিলেন, যে মুন্নাবাও-খোকারাপারের রেল চালুর জন্য 'কারিগরি স্তরের' বৈঠক হবে। উপকূল রক্ষা বাহিনীর মধ্যে যোগাযোগ বাড়তে কথা হবে সমঝোতা পত্র নিয়ে। ভারতের সীমান্ত রক্ষা বাহিনী (বি এস এফ) এবং পাকিস্তানের রেঞ্জার্সের মধ্যে দ্বি-বার্ষিক বৈঠক হবে, গুজরাতে সির ক্রিক এলাকার কোথায় কোন দেশের সীমান্ত-খুঁটি রয়েছে, তা দেখতে যুগ্ম সমীক্ষা হবে এবং কূটনীতিকদের যোগাযোগ বাড়তে দুই বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের নবীন অফিসারদের 'স্টাডি গ্রুপ' দুই দেশে সফর করবে। প্রথাগত এবং পরমাণু অস্ত্রের ব্যাপারে পাকিস্তান চুক্তির বদলে বিশেষজ্ঞদের দিয়ে প্রস্তাবগুলি আরও যাচাই করা হবে।

আজই ইসলামাবাদে ফিরে গেলেন কাসুরি। তার আগে সনিয়ার দেখা চেয়েও পাননি পাক বিদেশমন্ত্রী। বিদেশমন্ত্রক সূত্রে খবর, কেন্দ্রে দু'টি শক্তি কেন্দ্র রয়েছে, এমন কোনও বার্তা যেন বাইরে না যায় সেই জন্যে ইচ্ছা করেই কাসুরির সঙ্গে সনিয়ার সাক্ষাৎ করানো হয়নি।

Small mercies

Delhi and Islamabad cannot rest on their laurels

Not a lot appears to have emerged from the latest round of talks between Natwar Singh and Khurshid Kasuri, with both sides sticking to their scripts — Delhi on the necessity of ending cross-border terrorism, and Islamabad on the centrality of resolving Kashmir. In that event, the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir holding amounts to small mercies. If one parses Natwar Singh's statement at the joint press conference after the talks, to the effect that diplomacy provides hope, not salvation, that is a diplomatic way of saying that differences were more salient at the talks. Although infiltration across the LoC has gone down, clearly Islamabad has not sheathed its terror weapon, despite Musharraf's assurances to Vajpayee in January. On the Indian side, there is not much by way of dialogue with Kashmiris. The proposal to resolve Kashmir by a certain deadline, which Islamabad put forward, is clearly untenable and was rightly shot down. Right now not even the ghost of a solution that would be agreeable to both sides is visible; and to put down a deadline for completion of talks would be setting oneself up for failure.

What could work in a situation like this? There is clearly a lot of wisdom in moving forward on other fronts where progress is possible, such as greater trade and economic relations, liberal visa regimes and more people-to-people contact, setting up road and rail links and demilitarising Siachen. But it would be unrealistic to hope for rapid progress in these areas if violence continues in Kashmir. Some sort of process will therefore have to be in place to discuss possible solutions in Kashmir, no matter how small and incremental be the progress made in the matter. That is a reality that Delhi will have to wake up to sooner or later. The process cannot, however, have any Damocles' sword of deadlines hanging over it — that is the reality that Islamabad must deal with. Both sides must, however, get down to the nitty-gritty of how much give and take is possible on Kashmir. It is going to be a long process, but the first steps must be undertaken.

Peace should continue at all costs: Kasuri

By Mohammed Iqbal
JAIPUR, SEPT. 7. The Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, today expressed the hope that India and Pakistan would tread the path

of peace and harmony "despite several difficulties." The people in both the countries wanted friendly relations and peace in the region.

Talking to reporters after performing *ziarat* (pilgrimage) at

the Dargah of the Sufi saint, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, in Ajmer this morning, Mr. Kasuri pointed out that he had come with a message to foster friendship, he said: "The dialogue we are engaging with In-

dia is with sincerity."

Describing Mr. Singh as a man with considerable experience, Mr. Kasuri said: "I feel that both of us have started understanding each other. We both know that the issues before us are very difficult and complex but we are trying to respect each other's point of view in totality."

Asked about the results of the current bilateral talks, Mr. Kasuri said it was a matter of perception and those criticising the talks "should try to see the half-empty glass as half-full."

Earlier, Mr. Kasuri — accompanied by his wife, Nasreen Kasuri, the Pakistan High Commissioner to India, Aziz Ahmed Khan, and senior High Commission officials — visited the Dargah and offered a green velvet *chadar* (shawl).

Message to all people

Mr. Kasuri spent about 20 minutes inside the mausoleum and sought the Sufi saint's blessings. He also offered floral tributes at the tomb. Later, he said, "I want to send a message not only to the Muslims in India, but to all the Indian people including Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Jains and other communities that people of Pakistan want friendship with all of you."

Sonia not to meet: Page 11

Free visas for Pakistani journalists

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 7. It took an orthodox setting to produce unusual "results." The Indian and Pakistan Foreign Ministers, Natwar Singh and Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, were subjected to a barrage of complaints about hurdles in the path of journalists crossing borders to perform their duties.

A journalist from Pakistan, Imtiaz Alam, who has promoted a group called the South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA), was in his elements — lambasting the Indian and

Pakistani establishments for keeping a tight control on the media.

While both Mr. Singh and Mr. Kasuri had previously "agreed" not to say anything in public to a large gathering of journalists and a sprinkling of politicians, Mr. Singh, in response to the long litany of complaints, announced that "free visas" would be issued to Pakistani journalists by India.

As Mr. Alam was speaking, the National Security Adviser, J.N. Dixit, who was also present, whispered something to Mr. Singh. As soon as Mr. Alam finished, Mr. Singh made the

announcement of "free visas".

"Mr. Dixit and I will persuade the Home Minister [Shivraj Patil] to go along with us," Mr. Singh said, indicating that the matter would also be placed before the Cabinet Committee on Security.

"There should be no problem in allowing Pakistani journalists to move freely," he said and asked Mr. Alam, "*Aap kaan jana chahie hain?*" (Where do you want to go?)

Mr. Kasuri now chipped in. But he was a little more circumspect — pointing out that there had been a Cabinet reshuffle in Pakistan and he did

not even know who his Minister of State was.

"I do make a promise. I will try my best to act in sync with India. So please go at full speed [with your proposal]," he said.

Mr. Kasuri said he was the one who had taken up the case of SAFMA to be linked with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) — in fact, he was regarded as an anti-establishment figure in Pakistan.

Now even the couple of resident Indian and Pakistani journalists in Islamabad and New Delhi have only a three-city, three-entry visa.

NOT IMPOSING PRECONDITIONS, SAYS KASURI

Modest 'progress' in talks: Natwar

By Amit Baruah

*Qwerty
Pank*

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 6. Islamabad is "not imposing preconditions" that movement on Jammu and Kashmir is a must for pressing ahead with the composite dialogue on a range of subjects with India, the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, said here today.

At a joint press interaction with his counterpart, Natwar Singh, Mr. Kasuri, however, said that in order to put bilateral relations on an even keel, the Kashmir issue had to be tackled because once India and Pakistan started cooperating "the sky was the limit." If Mr. Kasuri spoke frankly on Kashmir, so did Mr. Singh on cross-border terrorism and infiltration.

Admitting that only a "modest progress" had been made in the talks, Mr. Singh said that the Petroleum Ministers of the two countries would discuss the issue of an oil/gas pipeline running through Pakistan to India. A joint survey would be conducted of the boundary pillars in the horizontal segment of the international boundary in the Sir Creek area. Also, experts would hold meetings on both conventional and nuclear confidence-building measures.

It was agreed to run a special day bus service from Amritsar to Nankana Sahib and other religious places in Lahore on special occasions, Mr. Singh said. Technical talks on the Khokrapar-Munabao rail link would be held in October-November.

Natwar to visit Pakistan

As part of the composite dialogue, the Foreign Secretaries would meet again in December and Mr. Singh announced that he had accepted an invitation to

visit Pakistan. (He told this correspondent that the visit could take place after the Foreign Secretaries meet).

No agreement appears to have been reached on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, with the two sides agreeing to discuss it further at the level of officials. The travel documents to be used for the service seems to be a sticking point.

Stating that "diplomacy provided hope not salvation" and that even a modest progress was "worthy of respect," Mr. Singh stressed, "India is committed to deepen and widen its engagement with Pakistan in order to resolve all issues and to build a durable structure of peace and stability in South Asia — free from an atmosphere of terrorism and violence."

'Infiltration, a concern'

Recalling the January 6 joint press statement, wherein the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, said that he would not allow Pakistan-controlled territory to be used for terrorist purposes, Mr. Singh reiterated that cross-border infiltration remained a serious concern.

Referring to the review of the composite dialogue, Mr. Kasuri told presspersons: "Of course, he [Mr. Singh] mentioned his concerns and I had to mention mine. I spoke of the human rights situation in Jammu and Kashmir and I suggested to him ... that regardless of the words that we use and the gloss that we put, we are all aware of what has been the cause of perpetual tension between our two countries and what has caused three wars between us and a near war in 2002. And that was the issue of Jammu and Kashmir."

More reports on Page 11

BEYOND DRAMA

The decision of India and Pakistan to continue with the ceasefire between them will invite widespread relief. The external affairs minister, Mr K. Natwar Singh, and his counterpart, Mr Khursheed Mahmud Kasuri, have also agreed to a series of incremental steps to take the composite dialogue process forward. By all accounts, the meeting of the two foreign ministers in New Delhi has been satisfactory and productive. The decision to sustain the ceasefire which has been operative since November, 2003, is significant. Before the ceasefire, shelling across the line of control created havoc in bordering villages. Similarly, the military confrontation in Siachen had led to hundreds of casualties on both sides.

Most of this stopped after a ceasefire was declared. It was unreal, however, to expect a dramatic breakthrough or to imagine that differences over cross-border terrorism and Jammu and Kashmir would be resolved after a couple of meetings. But it was critical for New Delhi and Islamabad to agree to continue talking in spite of the disagreements. Thankfully, the two foreign ministers have agreed to do this at various levels of the composite dialogue. In the days preceding the meeting of the two foreign ministers, however, there was a growing perception that Pakistan was intensifying hostilities in Kashmir. Violence had begun to escalate in the valley and there were reports of increased infiltration. There was also a feeling in New Delhi that Pakistan was trying to sabotage the internal dialogue with the separatists from Kashmir. Indeed, on the eve of the talks, Mr Kasuri had declared that Kashmiris should be involved in the dialogue; something that he knew would be clearly unacceptable to New Delhi. Besides the ceasefire, the two countries have agreed to hold technical talks on the Khokrapar-Munabao Rail link, to continue discussions on nuclear confidence-building measures, and improve communications between the coast guards of both sides. The issue of opening the road link between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad seems to have been discussed and some progress has appropriately been made.

Interestingly, the Hurriyat leader, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who met Mr Kasuri, seems to have emphasized the need for introducing specific confidence-building measures in Jammu and Kashmir, including the opening of communication links across the line of control. The gradualism that seems to have defined the meeting of the two foreign ministers is clearly the way forward. It should be clear, by now, that peace in south Asia cannot be created through dramatic gestures or on the basis of an instant formula. Peace has to be built brick by brick through a series of incremental steps which create constituencies that will have a strong stake in the stability of south Asia. That process has, perhaps, begun.

7 SEP 2004

আলোচনা ও যুদ্ধবিরতি চলবে

সন্ত্রাস, কাশ্মীর নিয়ে

প্রকাশ্য মতান্তর

নটবর ও কাসুরির

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৬ সেপ্টেম্বর: কাশ্মীর ও সন্ত্রাসবাদ নিয়ে বিদেশমন্ত্রীদের প্রকাশ্যে বাদানুবাদ সত্ত্বেও দ্বিপাক্ষিক আলোচনা বন্ধ করছে না ভারত ও পাকিস্তান। দু'দেশের বিদেশমন্ত্রীদের বৈঠকের শেষে আজ এই দুই প্রসঙ্গে কোনও অগ্রগতি না-হলেও অন্য কয়েকটি বিশ্বাসবর্ধক পদক্ষেপের ঘোষণা করে দু'দেশই বুঝিয়ে দিতে চেয়েছে, আপাতত তারা কথা চালিয়ে যেতেই আগ্রহী। একই সঙ্গে ঠিক হয়েছে, সীমান্ত ও নিয়ন্ত্রণের খায় সংঘর্ষবিরতিও যথারীতি বজায় থাকবে।

বৈঠকের শেষে বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহের বক্তব্য, “সীমান্ত-পারের সন্ত্রাস এখনও আমাদের কাছে গভীর উদ্বেগের বিষয়, কিন্তু শুধু কাশ্মীরের জন্য অন্য ক্ষেত্রে সম্পর্কের উন্নতি আটকে থাকবে না।” পাক বিদেশমন্ত্রী খুরশিদ মেহমুদ কাসুরিও বলেছেন, “আমরা কিছু চাপিয়ে দিতে চাইছি না। কিন্তু ইতিহাসবোধ প্রয়োগ করে, সাধারণ বুদ্ধি খরচ করে মূল সমস্যাটি তো বুঝতে হবে। দক্ষিণ এশিয়ায় তখনই প্রকৃত শান্তি আসবে, যখন সমাধান হবে কাশ্মীর সমস্যার।”

দুই দেশের যৌথ বিবৃতির খসড়া আজই তৈরি হয়েছে। আগামী ৮ তারিখ তা প্রকাশ করা হবে। বিদেশ মন্ত্রক সূত্রে বলা হয়েছে, কাসুরি আরও দু'দিন ভারতে আছেন। এই দু'দিন পাক নেতৃত্ব কী বলেন, তা দেখে নিয়ে নিশ্চিত মনেই নয়াদিল্লি যৌথ বিবৃতি জারি করতে চায়। তবে বিবৃতির মধ্যে যে সব আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থা থাকছে, তা আজই বলে দিয়েছেন নটবর। এই মাসের শেষের দিকে নিউ ইয়র্কে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের সাধারণ অধিবেশনের ফাঁকে মনমোহন ও মুশারফের বৈঠক হবে। শীর্ষ বৈঠকে শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া ও কাশ্মীর-সহ বিভিন্ন বিষয়ে সামগ্রিক আলোচনার অগ্রগতির লক্ষ্যে প্রয়োজনীয় পটভূমি আজ তৈরি করা হল বলে মনে করছে কূটনৈতিক মহল। রাতে, কাসুরির সঙ্গে সাক্ষাতের পরে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহও জানিয়েছেন, “দুই দেশ যে ভাবে আলোচনা চালিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে, তাতে আমি খুশি।”

নটবরের দাবি, পারস্পরিক সম্পর্ক বাড়াতে ‘অনেকগুলি ক্ষেত্রেই একমত’ হয়েছে। ঠিক হয়েছে, ● রাজস্থানের মুন্নাবাও ও পাকিস্তানের খোকরাপারের মধ্যে রেল চালুর জন্য অক্টোবর বা নভেম্বরে ‘কারিগরি স্তরে’র বৈঠক হবে। ● দু'দেশের উপকূলরক্ষী বাহিনীর মধ্যে যোগাযোগ বাড়াতে সমঝোতা পত্র কী ভাবে করা সম্ভব, তার জন্য কথা হবে। ভারতের বি এস এফ এবং পাকিস্তানের রেঞ্জার্সের মধ্যেও

বছরে দু'বার কথা হবে। ● অমৃতসর থেকে লাহোর, কর্তারপুর বা ননকনা সাহিবের মতো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ জায়গায় উৎসবের সময়ে আরও বেশি তীর্থযাত্রী যেতে পারবেন। ● কূটনৈতিকদের যোগাযোগ বাড়াতে দুই বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের নবীন অফিসারদের ‘স্টাডি গ্রুপ’ দুই দেশে সফর করবে।

অবশ্য অন্য কয়েকটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ক্ষেত্রে উন্নতি থমকে গিয়েছে। ● প্রথাগত ও পরমাণু অস্ত্রের ব্যাপারে পাকিস্তান চুক্তির বদলে বিশেষজ্ঞদের দিয়ে প্রস্তাবগুলি আরও যাচাই করতে চেয়েছে। ● করাচি ও মুম্বইয়ে কনসুলেট খোলার জটও ছাড়াইনি। কাসুরি বলেছেন, “আমরা জিমা হাউসের মালিকানা চেয়েছিলাম। ভারত পরিবর্তে অন্য সম্পত্তি দিতে চেয়েছে। এই সম্পত্তিগুলি দেখতে দিলে পরবর্তী সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে পারব।” এই উত্তর আংশিক খণ্ডন করে নটবরের বক্তব্য, “কিছু সম্পত্তি দেখতে ইতিমধ্যেই পাকিস্তানি বন্ধুদের বলেছি। দু'পক্ষই দ্রুত কনসুলেট চালু করতে দায়বদ্ধ।” ● শ্রীনগর-মুজফ্ফরাবাদের বাস চালুর কোনও ফয়সালা হয়নি।

শীর্ষ নেতাদের বৈঠকের আগে কাশ্মীর ও সন্ত্রাসবাদ নিয়ে নিজেদের অবস্থান প্রকাশ্যে ফের জানানোর সুযোগ ছাড়াইনি দুই দেশই। কাসুরিকে পাশে নিয়ে নটবর সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে বলেছেন, “সীমান্তপারের সন্ত্রাস এখনও বিশেষ দৃষ্টিস্তার বিষয়। ৬ জানুয়ারি প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ বিবৃতি দিয়ে এই বিষয়ে তাঁর দায়বদ্ধতার কথা বলেছিলেন। তিনি বলেছিলেন, পাকিস্তানের মাটিতে জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপ তাঁরা চালাতে দেবেন না।” কাসুরির উত্তর, “ভারত যেমন তাদের দৃষ্টিস্তার কথা বলেছে, আমিও তেমন বৈঠকে আমাদের চিন্তা ব্যক্ত করেছি। কাশ্মীরে মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘন হচ্ছে। কাশ্মীর যে কেন্দ্রীয় বিষয়, তা বুঝতে হবে।” এর পর নটবর বলেন, “আমরা সব বিষয়ে উন্নতি চাই। শিমলা সমঝোতায় বলা হয়েছে, কাশ্মীর নিয়ে দুই দেশ আলোচনার মাধ্যমে সমাধান করবে। কাশ্মীরে নির্বাচিত সরকার আছে। সেখান থেকে সাংসদেরা নির্বাচিত হয়ে এসেছেন।” কাসুরিও জবাব দিয়েছেন, “পাকিস্তানের দৃষ্টি মোটেও একমুখী নয়। আমরা অন্য ক্ষেত্রেও সহযোগিতা বাড়াতে পারি। কিন্তু মূল সমস্যা চিহ্নিত করতে আমাদের আরও পরিণত হতে হবে।”

ডিসেম্বরে ফের দুই বিদেশমন্ত্রীর বৈঠক হবে। নটবরকে পাক বিদেশমন্ত্রী ইসলামাবাদে যাওয়ার জন্য আমন্ত্রণ জানালে তিনি তা গ্রহণ করেছেন। তার আগে, এই বৈঠকে কী হল, তার পর্যালোচনা হবে নিউ ইয়র্কে। যখন মুখোমুখি বসবেন মনমোহন সিংহ এবং পারভেজ মুশারফ।

KASURI REMARKS ON KASHMIR A THING OF THE PAST: DELHI

'A good beginning' on Day One of talks

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 5. — "A good beginning." That was how senior official sources categorised the first day of talks between the foreign ministers of India and Pakistan, Mr Natwar Singh and Mr Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, today. An hour-long one-on-one meeting between Mr Singh and Mr Kasuri prior to the delegation-level talks suggests that the minor "disappointment" over Mr Kasuri's remarks on Kashmir was in the past. "It's a relationship we're looking at," an official source said. "It's not about words." The two countries appeared set to announce a fresh set of dates for round two of the revived composite dialogue process, including the J&K issue.

New Delhi and Islamabad are also likely to announce dates for technical-level discussions on the Khokhrapar-Munabao train service after the talks between their foreign ministers end tomorrow, as they look at a "mechanism to operationalise" the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service that both countries agree is a crucial confidence-building measure for intra-Kashmir harmony.

Also likely is an MoU on cooperation between the Coast Guards of India and Pakistan, and cooperation in the training process of foreign service probationers, official sources said.

The ceasefire that is "holding" along the LoC will continue to be in place as the "most important CBM," sources said, as both countries continue to take small steps ahead to remain engaged in



Mr Natwar Singh with Mr Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri in New Delhi on Sunday. — AFP

the process of dialogue.

There were no indications of a bilateral summit. Though Islamabad "categorically" rejected serious Indian concerns that it was officially aiding cross-border terrorism, an indication that relations were on the mend was in Delhi's private concession that may be there is little "official connivance" in the increased levels of cross-border infiltration detect-

Between friends

NEW DELHI, Sept 5. — When Mr Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri meets his old college friend, petroleum minister Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar, for a private lunch tomorrow, one of the topics due to come up is the proposed \$4.16 billion Iran-India gas pipeline via Pakistan. Officials said Islamabad was "very keen" and had "given many assurances" of security for the pipeline.

— Nilova Roy Chaudhury

Details on page 4

ed over the past few months. But, "for us, terrorism is a critical issue that has to be addressed," a senior official said.

Some of the "slew of proposals" could be firmed up at the talks, including finding ways and means for disengagement at Siachen, without compromising their stands on the issue. Also, India could invite a Pakistani business delegation to remove any misgivings on Delhi's commitment to better bilateral economic ties.

A joint foreign ministry statement released today, said the two ministers reviewed the recommendations of the foreign secretaries. A new word "affable" was added to the usual "friendly, cordial and constructive" used to describe the atmosphere at the talks.

Mr Kasuri also met Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq who demanded visa-free travel for people of J&K across the LoC and intra-Kashmiri dialogue, adds PTI.

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679

India, Pakistan differ on cross-border terrorism

Agreement on steps to take dialogue forward

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 5. India and Pakistan have agreed on incremental steps to take the dialogue process forward even as they differed on the issues of cross-border terrorism and Jammu and Kashmir at a meeting between their Foreign Ministers, Natwar Singh and Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, at Hyderabad House here today.

Mr. Singh and Mr. Kasuri met for nearly 70 minutes without aides and for another 80 minutes with their delegations to review the progress made in the first round of the eight-subject composite dialogue.

The two countries have reportedly agreed to hold technical talks on the Khokrapar-Munabao rail link, continue discussions on nuclear confidence-building measures, hold a dialogue between their Coast Guard and talk further on narcotics control and trade-related issues.

A joint statement on the deliberations is likely to be issued and the two Foreign Ministers will hold a joint press conference at the end of their second round of discussions on Monday afternoon. Just 30 minutes of discussions have been scheduled for Monday, indicating that officials of the two countries were working on the sidelines to hammer out an agreement.

'Pakistan not unifocal'

"I have come with a positive frame of mind," Mr. Kasuri told *The Hindu* before the talks. Pakistan was not being "unifocal" (a term used by India on Saturday) by repeatedly bringing attention to the Kashmir issue, he added. Pakistan, he said, wanted peace in South Asia. According to Mr. Kasuri, both countries had to talk on all issues and they could not change their minds on this matter. Pakistan, he said, believed that having good relations with India was in its own interest.

On his part, Mr. Singh said he shared the sentiments expressed by Mr. Kasuri. "We will carry the dialogue process forward," he said. India was committed to having good neighbourly, friendly and cordial relations with Pakistan.

Later briefing presspersons



BUILDING TRUST: The External Affairs Minister, K. Natwar Singh, and his Pakistan counterpart, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, have a quiet word before the formal start of the bilateral talks in New Delhi on Sunday. — Photo: V. Sudershan.

the Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Masood Khan, said he would not use the word "happy or unhappy" to describe the progress made at the talks, but claimed that the process was satisfactory. The situation had to be contrasted and compared with what existed earlier. Asked "how satisfied" Pakistan was on discussions relating to Kashmir, he said the two sides had discussed the matter and it was a "central issue" between the two countries.

The Pakistani spokesman hoped that "this current phase of negotiations" between the two countries would lead to a just and lasting solution to the

Kashmir issue, adding that Mr. Kasuri's statement yesterday was "deliberate". It was not a coincidence, he said.

Hurriyat lauded

On Mr. Kasuri's meetings with the Hurriyat faction leaders, Mr. Khan said Pakistan would be happy if the Hurriyat stood united. Islamabad felt that the Hurriyat had played a historic role and "lauded" efforts at unity.

"We reject this allegation of cross-border terrorism or that there has been any increase," Mr. Khan said. "Kashmiris have been complaining that human rights violations by India have

increased since November. It should be ended so that Kashmiris feel part of the dialogue process."

Separately, the External Affairs Ministry spokesman, Navtej Sarna, said today's meeting was held in a friendly and affable environment when asked whether Mr. Kasuri's statement on Kashmir had cast a shadow on the talks. "We have already given you our reaction to that statement last evening," he

said, seeking to put an end to the controversy.

Bus service

Asked about the state of play on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, Mr. Sarna said this was under discussion. "This was a proposal made by India several months ago and we have been hoping that this is a matter which will be sorted out and the bus service would be operationalised as soon as possible."

'India will engage Pakistan on Kashmir issue'

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 5. The National Security Adviser, J.N. Dixit, has said that Pakistan should talk to "their" Kashmiris and India to "our" Kashmiris in a bid to address the Kashmir issue, but indicated that a tripartite dialogue involving India, Pakistan and the Kashmiris was not on the cards.

In an interview to BBC, Mr. Dixit, a former High Commissioner to Pakistan, said there was nothing to worry about when asked about the exchange of words between India and Pakistan on Kashmir.

Stating that both India and Pakistan wanted an outcome favourable to them on Kashmir, Mr. Dixit said there was "tactical manoeuvring" on the issue, choosing to use the Hindi word "pantreybaazi".

Referring to Pakistani concerns on Kashmir, the National Security Adviser said India would engage Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. He said there was a groundswell of public

opinion in both countries that wanted issues between India and Pakistan resolved.

'Nothing new'

"It's unfortunate that Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri had to say what he said yesterday [a reference to the Pakistani Foreign Minister's remarks on Kashmir]. But in fundamental terms, he has not said anything new," Mr. Dixit said.

He argued that it had always been Pakistan's view that Kashmir was the precondition on which other relationships could be built up. "We have just the opposite view that a reasonable, practical dialogue can only take place when there is an absence of violence."

However, Mr. Dixit said there was seriousness about addressing specific issues and he hoped that the dialogue process would move forward. "Yesterday, the Prime Minister [Manmohan Singh] declared publicly at his press conference that he wants to move the process forward ..."

Pointing out that there had

been an increase in infiltration into India since June, he said this was a matter of concern.

On Kashmir, he said this was both an important and difficult issue. "But should the delay in the resolution of the issue affect the development, well-being, focus and availability of resources for the good of over a billion people living in India and Pakistan?"

Asked about the dangers of India and Pakistan being nuclear powers and neighbours, Mr. Dixit stated, "I feel this is a certain paranoid superiority complex that the West has ... these people lecturing us only implies that they have a greater sense of patience and judgement which we don't have. I don't agree with that ..."

"At least during the Kargil war, Pakistani leaders articulated in so many words a nuclear threat but I suppose when the chips are down, the Pakistani leadership also has the good sense not to get involved in a confrontation of mass destruction," he added.

6 SEP 2004

THE HINDU

Pakistan should take action against LeT, Advani tells Kasuri

ND-11 6/9
By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 5. The Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, met the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, this evening to discuss the ongoing peace dialogue between India and Pakistan.

It is learnt that the discussion was quite candid with Mr. Advani making it known that the Bharatiya Janata Party did not feel that Pakistan had adequately addressed India's security concerns.

It was pointed out by him that the BJP considered the January 6 joint statement between the two countries issued in Islamabad a "very good high point" and it was expected that Pakistan would act on its assurance given in that statement not to permit any territory under its control to be used to support terrorism in any manner.

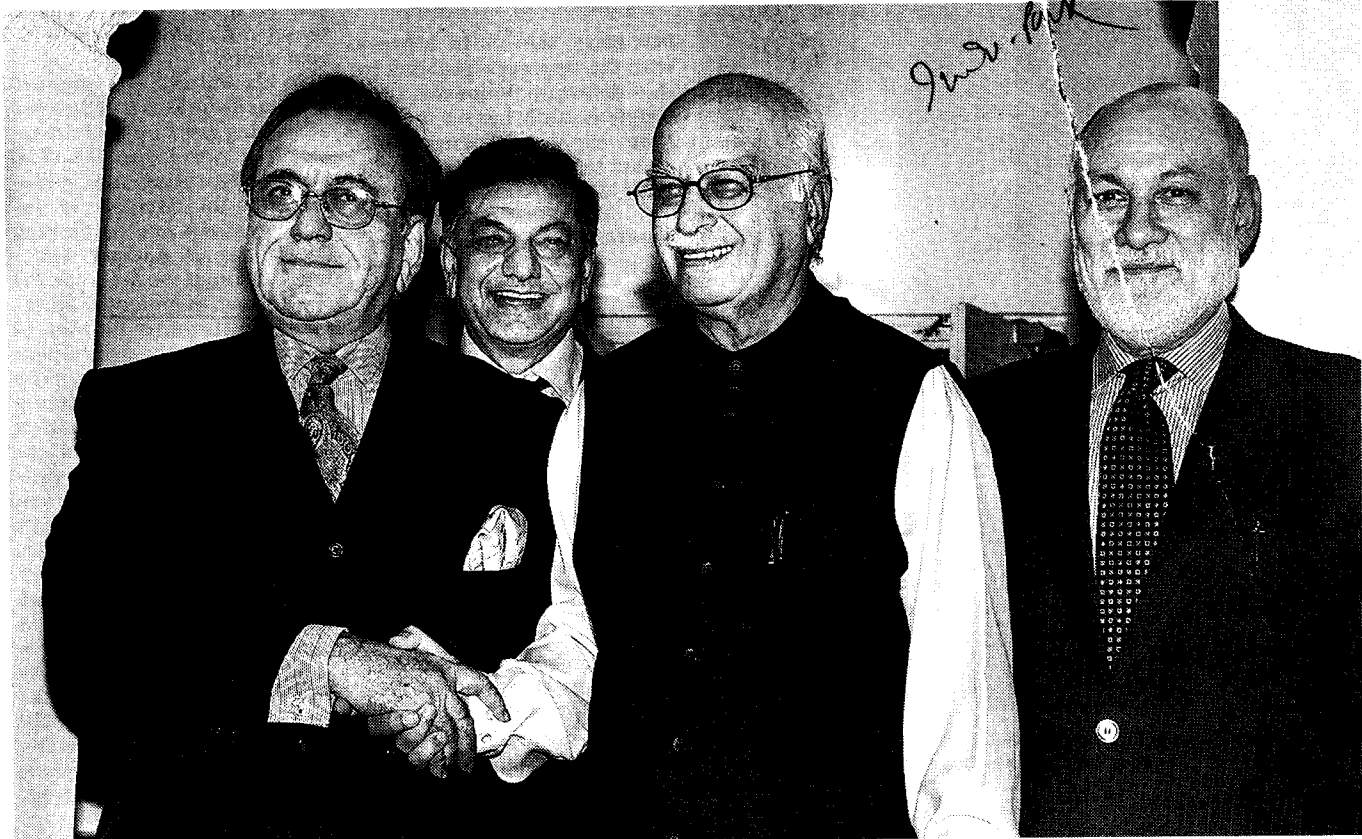
Mr. Advani said that while Pakistan had been taking action against the elements supporting the Al-Qaeda, similar action was lacking when it came to supporters of the Lashkar-e-Taiba and other groups engaged in acts of terrorism in Kashmir and other parts of India.

Assurance

It is understood that Mr. Kasuri assured Mr. Advani that there was no let-up in Pakistan's efforts to curb terrorism of all kinds.

Mr. Kasuri was to have also met the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, but that meeting was cancelled, as Mr. Vajpayee was indisposed.

The Pakistan Foreign Secretary, Riaz Khokar, the High Commissioner, Aziz Ahmed Khan, and some Pakistani officials were present.



The Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri (extreme left), with the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, at the latter's residence in New Delhi on Sunday. The Pakistan Foreign Secretary, Riaz Khokar, and the High Commissioner, Aziz Ahmed Khan, are with them. — Photo: Rajeev Bhatt

Left for real progress

By K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 5. The Left parties today emphasised that the Foreign Minister-level talks between India and Pakistan should result in real progress in the solution of issues between the two countries and not get deadlocked over a single issue.

The Left parties' leaders con-

veyed this when a delegation called on the visiting Pakistan Foreign Minister here.

The delegation included the Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, the CPI general secretary, A.B. Bardhan, M.K. Pandhe (CPI-M) and Abani Roy of the Revolutionary Socialist Party.

Briefing reporters later, Mr. Bardhan said that the Left parties told Mr. Kasuri that while Jammu and Kashmir was an is-

sue, it was tough to arrive at a solution acceptable to both sides but the talks should not get bogged down on this count since there were several other issues on which progress could be made — the proposal to open another train route from Rajasthan and a bus service between Srinagar-Muzzaffarabad.

Objection

Mr. Bardhan said Mr. Kasuri mentioned that the country had objection to the suggestion that

travel on this bus be made feasible through passports since that would mean recognising the Line of Control as International Border, which was not acceptable. Instead, the suggestion was for allowing travel on the basis of identity cards. The Left leaders said they would communicate this to the United Progressive Alliance Government. The Left leaders were also extended an invitation to visit Pakistan after November 15, Mr. Bardhan said.

Talks with Kasuri are not likely to make significant progress

Hardening postures

TWENTY-TWENTY
BHARAT BHUSHAN

A road, the prime minister Manmohan Singh is fond of quoting, is made by walking step by step. However, it is unlikely that India and Pakistan will take any major step forward in the ongoing talks between the external affairs minister, Natwar Singh, and his Pakistani counterpart, Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri. Misperceptions on both sides will prevent the dialogue from progressing in any significant manner.

Pakistan thinks that Kashmir has bled India so heavily that New Delhi is now willing to settle the issue. Islamabad is looking for a solution that would go beyond the line of control as the border. When Pakistan talks of the need for a "political will" to resolve Kashmir, what it means is that the solution lies in India at least foregoing the Muslim-dominated Kashmir Valley. Such hopes are likely to be belied. When it comes to the crunch, India will not concede even an inch of territory. Any government that attempts this cannot survive.

India's misperception, on the other hand, is that Pakistan is fast becoming a failed state. New Delhi is, therefore, in no hurry to deal with Islamabad. Since they believe that time is on the Indian side, Indian political leaders are under no pressure to reach a settlement. However, Pakistan is not going down the drain as fast as many in India would like to believe. The Pakistani economy has been kept afloat with international injections of cash and will continue to be so. The political fault-lines in Pakistan have not become deep enough for an imminent crack up.

Misperceptions aside, the Natwar-Kasuri talks are not likely to make any significant progress for several other reasons. New Delhi realizes that Islamabad has handled its foreign policy and its Kashmir policy better, and that New Delhi needs to go on the front foot. Instead of Pakistan being in the dog house, the West has today more than accepted it — the United States of America has declared it as its major non-Nato ally, it has been readmitted into the Commonwealth, international financial assistance is flowing in, and the world has refused to take a firm position against its nuclear programme and nuclear proliferation activities.

On Kashmir, the statement of January 6, issued jointly in Islamabad, declaring that Kashmir would be resolved bilaterally to the satisfaction of the two sides has been subjected to a new interpretation. The satisfaction of Pakistan now lies in involving the Kashmiri people.

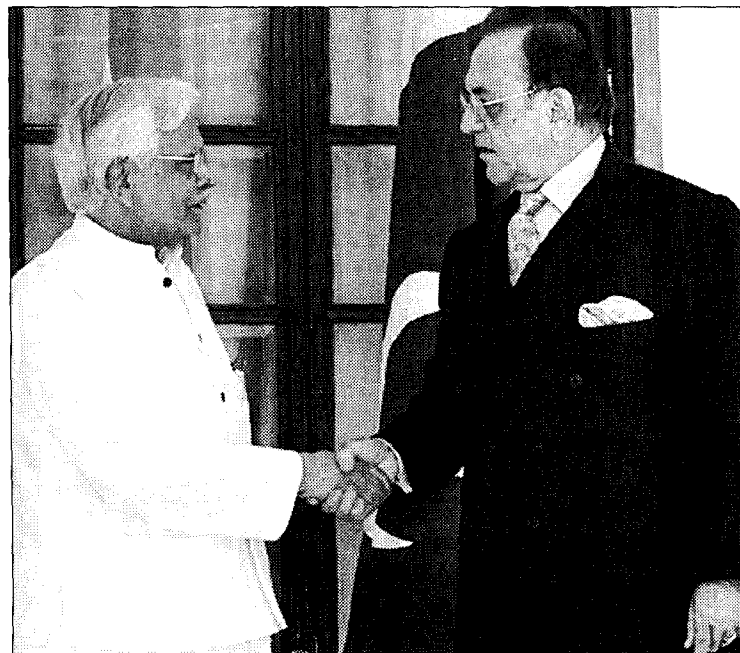
The singular achievement of the

visit to India of the Pakistan foreign secretary, Riaz Khokar, in the last week of June was to ensure that the dialogue between the moderate leaders of the All Party Hurriyat Conference and New Delhi does not take place. His intervention led to the resurrection of the separatist and pro-Pakistani leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, in Kashmir. Now Islamabad wants a political consolidation around Geelani.

Although Pakistan enjoys a high degree of deniability in its interfer-

ence within Hurriyat politics, its

role has been important in the systematic sidelining of moderate Kashmiri leaders through threats. Abdul Ghani Lone was murdered for advocating a line not acceptable to Pakistan. Mirwaiz Omar Farooq's uncle was assassinated this May and on the same day a grenade was thrown at his home. Two months later, in July, the Islamiya School, a reputed and old institution run by the Awami Action Committee chaired by the Mirwaiz, and a symbol of his authority, was burnt down.



■ New Delhi has realized that it has lost ground to Pakistan ■

a stronger leadership at the helm might have chosen to arrest Geelani on the eve of Kasuri's visit and then welcomed him for the composite dialogue.

After a host of confusing and accommodative statements, New Delhi has realized that it has lost ground to Pakistan. General Musharraf has put the onus of showing progress and sustaining the dialogue on India. In an attempt to do one better on the previous government, the new external affairs minister, Natwar Singh, even suggested that terrorist incidents would not be allowed to have an impact on the peace process or that India was even willing to consider the issue of changing the border in Kashmir

when the time came. Now, he is trying to retrieve lost ground. Having been put on the defensive by General Musharraf, who is not only defining the parameters of the dialogue but is also setting time-frames for settling the Kashmir issue, a belated attempt is being made to counter this.

New Delhi has finally decided that it serves no purpose to release the pressure on Pakistan. It is less willing today than three months ago to buy the line being peddled by Islamabad and Washington that General Musharraf was not fully in control of the terrorist groups in Pakistan. This may be true of al Qaida, but New Delhi does not believe this of Kashmiri *jihadi* groups. The widespread impression in Pakistan that India was ready to make some territorial concessions is also being corrected by publicly recalling the resolution of the Indian parliament that the entire territory of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir (including Pakistan-occupied Kashmir) belongs to India.

Unless India counters the prevalent impressions, the focus would be primarily on the current Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. This is how the peace process is being perceived internationally. The delegation of European members of parliament which visited Jammu and Kashmir in June this year, has given an adverse report on the human rights conditions in the state. The European Union now wants to appoint a special rapporteur on Kashmir.

Pakistan on its part has been extremely focused in its approach to Kashmir. It has not let any settlement take place even in relatively easily resolvable border issues such as Sir Creek, Siachen and the Wular Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project unless there is progress on Kashmir. Because of Pakistan's centred focus, some argue that India must not give any unilateral concessions in these areas in the hope that this would soften Islamabad's stand on Kashmir.

The only area where India might show flexibility is in encouraging greater contacts between the people of the two countries. However, here too, the expectation that expanding the peace constituency in Pakistan would necessarily be salutary is tempered by the fact that the impact of public opinion on military establishments is severely limited. The biggest achievement of the Kasuri-Natwar Singh dialogue at this state would be if they agree to continue talking, maintaining and consolidating the ceasefire along the LoC and liberalizing the visa regime.

Focus on the peace pipeline

By C. Raja Mohan

AS THE Foreign Ministers of India and Pakistan hold their first structured political dialogue in four decades, the question of building trans-border natural gas pipelines is likely to figure prominently in the bilateral agenda.

An Indo-Pakistan agreement to set up a joint working group to study all aspects — including security, reliability of supply, and two-way transit — of energy transportation has long been overdue.

The Union Petroleum Minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar, will have an opportunity to hold forth on the theme when he hosts the visiting Pakistani Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mehmud Kasuri, for lunch on Monday. A decision to set up such a working group would fulfil the promise by the two Foreign Secretaries at the end of their talks on Saturday for "further deepening and broadening the engagement" between the two nations.

Even more important such pipelines will help establish direct physical connectivity between India, on the one hand, and Iran and Central Asia, on the other, for the first time since the Partition of the Subcontinent. In restoring the geographic linkage, Pakistan stands to become the bridge state between the Subcontinent and its abutting regions to the west and north-west. Such connectivity will benefit both India and Pakistan.

The former will gain direct access to regions from which it has been

cut-off and the latter will reap benefits from the commercial transit across its territory. Energy pipelines constitute "win-win" geo-economics for both India and Pakistan.

The idea of building pipelines to transport natural gas from the Persian Gulf to South Asia has generated considerable regional and international interest over the last decade. International energy companies as well as Iran and Turkmenistan that have huge gas reserves see India as the nearest market for them.

While the economic logic behind trans-regional pipelines has always

Third, New Delhi has often said Pakistan cannot pick and choose areas of economic cooperation with India. It insists that economic cooperation must be broad-ranging and a trans-border pipeline could only be an integral part of it.

India cannot be unaware that states and corporations have found ways to address both questions of security and reliability through a variety of legal and financial instruments.

In recent months, a bit of creativity has crept into the Indian positions on the pipeline. India had begun to hint that if Pakistan opens up to

For many traditionalists in Islamabad, the geopolitical significance of Pakistan lies in denying access to India rather than making money out of it. It is only in the very recent period that a bit of economics has begun to intrude into the Pakistani strategic calculus. Many Pakistani leaders, including the President Pervez Musharraf, as well as its professional diplomatic corps have begun to discuss the importance of Pakistan as a geo-economic fulcrum between the Subcontinent, Persian Gulf and Central Asia.

There is also a strong view in Pakistan that mutually beneficial cross-border economic and energy cooperation must wait until a resolution of the Kashmir conflict is at hand.

Until now the arguments for and against the pipelines in both countries have been abstract. A joint working group has the advantage of dealing with the many technical, economic and security issues involved in a comprehensive manner.

If and when there is political will in both capitals, energy transportation projects could just be taken off the shelf. In the interim, technical discussions on pipelines will do no harm to the declared positions.

A joint working group on pipelines would offer, in Mani Shankar Aiyar's elegant phrase, a forum for "conversion without commitment." Looked at from any angle, a formal mechanism for an Indo-Pakistan discussion on peace pipelines is the way to go.

Energy pipelines constitute win-win geo-economics for both India and Pakistan.

broad-based economic engagement, it could favourably consider the question of natural gas pipelines across Pakistani territory.

At the official level discussion on economic cooperation in Islamabad last month, India had also proposed the idea of two-way transit. If Pakistan is prepared to let energy flows in one direction to India is it ready for similar movement of goods and energy in the other direction?

India has also offered to build a diesel pipeline into Pakistan and provide a cheaper option on importing petroleum products. Pakistan's reticence in response is rooted in some enduring political ambiguities about economic cooperation with India.

been compelling, hostility between India and Pakistan has held up progress. Sections of the Pakistani establishment have been enthusiastic about these pipelines to India, thanks to the prospect of substantive transit fees.

But India has had a number of legitimate concerns. One dealt with the question of physical security of such pipelines that would run through turbulent territory either in Pakistan or Afghanistan. The second concern relates to potential Pakistani control over energy lifelines to India and the consequent leverage of Islamabad over the large scale downstream investments in the petroleum sector on this side of the border.

আস্থাবর্ধনে অগ্রগতি

ভারত-পাক যৌথ বিবৃতি হতে পারে

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৫ সেপ্টেম্বর: ধীরে হলেও বরফ যে একটু একটু করে গলছে তার আভাস আজ মিলল ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের দুই বিদেশমন্ত্রীর মধ্যে বৈঠকে। আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থার মধ্যে পরমাণু অস্ত্র সংক্রান্ত পরীক্ষা নিরীক্ষাকেও নিয়ে আসতে রাজি হয়েছে দু' দেশ। অগ্রগতি হয়েছে আস্থাবর্ধক অন্যান্য ব্যবস্থাগুলির ক্ষেত্রেও। আস্থাবর্ধক বিষয়গুলি মিলিয়ে কাল দু' দেশ এক যৌথ বিবৃতি দিতে চলেছে। গত জানুয়ারিতে বাজপেয়ী ও মুশারফের যৌথ বিবৃতি জারির পর কাল আবার একটি যৌথ বিবৃতি জারি হলে দু' দেশের সম্পর্কের ক্ষেত্রে তা অবশ্যই তা এক উল্লেখযোগ্য অগ্রগতি বলে গণ্য হবে। 'শুরুটা ভালই' বলে জানানো হয়েছে বিদেশ মন্ত্রক থেকে।

দুই বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ এবং খুরশিদ মেহমুদ কাসুরির মধ্যে বৈঠকে আস্থাবর্ধক বিষয়গুলিতে মোটের উপরে একমত্য হয়েছে। আগামিকাল এ নিয়ে যাতে একটি সমঝোতাপত্র স্বাক্ষরিত হয়, জোর চেষ্টা চলছে তার। পরমাণু ক্ষেত্রে এই সহযোগিতার পাশাপাশি, রাজস্থানের খোকরাপাড় ও পাকিস্তানের সিদ্ধ প্রদেশের মুন্নাবাওয়ার মধ্যে যোগাযোগ স্থাপনেও চুক্তির চেষ্টা হচ্ছে। তবে শ্রীনগর-মুজফফরাবাদের মতো এই ক্ষেত্রেও অবশ্য একটি মতবিরোধ আছে। ভারত চাইছে টেকনিক্যাল স্তরের কথার মাধ্যমে এই পরিষেবা চালু করতে। অন্যদিকে পাকিস্তান আগে চায় রাজনৈতিক আলোচনা।

পরমাণু বিষয়ে আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থার মধ্যে থাকছে, বিভিন্ন পরীক্ষার আগে ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের পক্ষ থেকে একে অপরকে জানানো। এ ছাড়া, পরমাণু কেন্দ্রে কোনও দুর্ঘটনা ঘটলে বা তথ্য চুরি ফাঁস হলে, তা-ও জানিয়ে দেওয়া। সম্প্রতি পাকিস্তানের পরমাণু তথ্য অন্য দেশকে বিক্রি করার ঘটনা ঘটেছিল। ভারতের বহু চেষ্টা সত্ত্বেও পাকিস্তান সরকার তার বিশদ বিবরণ নয়াদিল্লিকে জানায়নি। উদ্বিগ্ন ভারত তাই পরমাণু ক্ষেত্রে আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থার আওতায় এই অধিকারও চায়। কাসুরির সঙ্গে পেট্রোলিয়াম মন্ত্রী মণিশঙ্কর আইয়ারের বৈঠক হবে। পাকিস্তান হয়ে ইরান থেকে যে গ্যাস পাইপলাইনের প্রস্তাব দীর্ঘদিন যাবৎ আটকে রয়েছে, বৈঠকে তারই জট ছাড়ানোর চেষ্টা হবে বলে খবর।

আজকের বৈঠকে কাশ্মীর-সহ সমস্ত বিষয়ে আলোচনা চালানোর অঙ্গীকার করলেও ভারত সন্ত্রাসবাদ ও অনুপ্রবেশ বন্ধে পাকিস্তানকে ফের চাপের মুখে ফেলল। বিদেশমন্ত্রক সূত্রে খবর, রীতিমতো তথ্যপ্রমাণ দিয়ে আজ দুই দেশের বিদেশমন্ত্রীদের বৈঠকে দিল্লি দাবি করেছে, পাক সরকার নিজেদের মাটিতে ভারত-বিরোধী জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপ বন্ধ করতে অবিলম্বে সক্রিয় ভূমিকা নিক। অন্য কিছু ক্ষেত্রে 'ভাল উন্নতি হয়েছে' বলে মানলেও কেন্দ্রের নতুন সরকার এখন মনে করছে শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়া আরও এগিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়ার জন্য সন্ত্রাসবাদ বন্ধ করা জরুরি। বিশেষত কাশ্মীরে এই মরসুমে পাক মদতপুষ্ট জঙ্গিদের অনুপ্রবেশ এবং সন্ত্রাসবাদের ঘটনা বেড়ে যাওয়ায় দিল্লি উদ্বিগ্ন। কাল প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ তাঁর প্রথম সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে বলেছিলেন, শান্তির আলোচনা এগিয়ে নিতে জরুরি হচ্ছে সন্ত্রাসবাদে মদত বন্ধ হওয়া। পাকিস্তান অবশ্য যথারীতি সন্ত্রাসে মদতের অভিযোগ খণ্ডন করেছে। পাক সরকারের মুখপাত্র মাসুদ খানের বক্তব্য, "আমরা এই অভিযোগ অস্বীকার করছি। কাশ্মীরে অনুপ্রবেশ মোটেও বাড়েনি।" উল্টে বর্তমান পরিস্থিতিতেই যে কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধানের উপযুক্ত পটভূমি, তা-ও বুঝিয়ে দিতে চেয়েছে পাকিস্তান। মাসুদ খানের বক্তব্য, "আমরা আশা করছি বর্তমান অবস্থা থেকেই কাশ্মীর বিবাদের ন্যায্য এবং নির্ণায়ক সমাধান সূত্র বেরোবে।" আজ সন্ধ্যাবেলা লোকসভার বিরোধী নেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর সঙ্গে দেখা করার কথা কাসুরির।

আজকের বৈঠকে ইসলামাবাদ যথারীতি আলোচনার মোড় কাশ্মীর সমস্যার দিকে ঘুরিয়ে দেওয়ার চেষ্টা চালিয়েছে। বৈঠকের পরে বিকেলে পাক বিদেশমন্ত্রী হরিয়ত নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে আলাদা বৈঠক করেন। এই অবস্থায় নয়াদিল্লি পাল্টা চলে সন্ত্রাস নিয়ন্ত্রণে পাকিস্তানের ভূমিকার কথা তুলেছে। এই মাসেই নিউ ইয়র্কে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের সাধারণ অধিবেশনের ফাঁকে মনমোহন ও মুশারফের বৈঠক হবে। সেখানে শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া এগিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়ার জন্য সুসংহত আলোচনা হবে বলে আশা করা হচ্ছে। ফলে ভারত চাইছে পাকিস্তান অবিলম্বে সন্ত্রাস বন্ধে ব্যবস্থা নিক,

এর পর আটের পাতায়

● হরিয়তকে আলোচনায় বসতে চাপ দিচ্ছে পাকিস্তানই..... পৃঃ ৫

Ritual tiff before neighbours talk

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, Sept. 4. — Once again there was a spat on the eve of important bilateral talks today, after the Indian and Pakistani foreign secretaries met to review the progress made so far in the composite dialogue process, with New Delhi expressing "considerable disappointment" at a statement made by the Pakistani foreign minister prior to his departure from Islamabad.

Saying it was "not in consonance with the spirit in which we have conducted the composite dialogue so far," the external affairs ministry spokesman also said that Mr Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri's statement that the Kashmiris should be given a choice to determine their own future, violated "Pakistan's own call for a rhetoric-restraint regime."

According to reports from Islamabad, Mr Kasuri said: "This choice should have been given to them (Kashmiris) in August, 1947. Fifty seven years later, we are still at the starting point," he said.

Hours after his statement on Kashmir kicked off a controversy, Mr Kasuri today said that Islamabad was not "unifocal" and was ready to resolve all issues. "We are ready to understand and resolve all issues. But there are some problems which cannot be ignored," he said after India objected to his statement.

Mr Kasuri arrived in New Delhi tonight for two days of talks on eight outstanding issues, including peace, security and CBMs with his counterpart, Mr Natwar Singh, beginning from tomorrow, during which they are due to chart a course for the future direction of the dialogue process.

Earlier in the day, the foreign



COMPANY, SECRETARY: Pakistan foreign secretary Mr Riaz Khokhar (right) with his Indian counterpart Mr Shyam Saran prior to the secretary-level talks in New Delhi on Saturday. — AFP

secretaries "assessed positively" the discussions so far on the eight-point composite dialogue process, and, according to a joint statement, "would be reporting to the foreign ministers with the recommendation that the composite dialogue should be continued" to deepen and broaden the engagement between the two sides.

The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, clarified at a press conference today that the basis for the dialogue process was the joint statement of January 2004 in which Pakistan vowed not to allow "any part of its territory" to be used for acts of terrorism or infiltration against India as the two sides had discussed.

Army's other battle in Valley

NEW DELHI, Sept. 4. — It is in Jammu & Kashmir that the Army has suffered the majority of its casualties since Independence, yet it is in that same troubled region that it has devoted its greatest energies for the well-being of the people. People who do not always cooperate with it, but people who it simply refuses to deem an adversary.

While assisting the local populace has been in practice ever since the troops were airlifted to protect Srinagar from the rampaging Afridi in 1947, in the last few years a concerted Sadbhavana mission has been put in

place. Both to earn goodwill as well as to fuel the peoples' aspirations for peace and prosperity.

The mission has many facets. Medical teams "patrol" areas difficult to access, and those requiring advanced treatment are sometimes transferred to Army hospitals as far away as Delhi and Chandigarh. Schools also get special treatment, the Army repairs buildings and arranges for students to visit other parts of the country. Vocational training centres for women are organised.

To boost development activity

the Army helps in building roads, bridges, mini-hydel stations and so on. The statistics tell their tale: bridges built — 16; roads constructed — 550 kms; water supply schemes — 108; villages electrified — 25; schools built — 50; schools renovated — 202; women empowerment centres — 67.

What has really built promising bonds are the tours arranged for schoolchildren to visit Agra, Jaipur and the Capital — often for the Republic Day festivities. Over 20,000 children have been thus exposed to other parts of their country. — SNS

5 SEP 2004

সন্ত্রাস নিয়ন্ত্রণে পাকিস্তানের তরফে স্পষ্ট ব্যবস্থা চায় দিল্লি

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার,
নয়াদিল্লি, ৪ সেপ্টেম্বর:
দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ক বাড়াতে
আগ্রহী নয়াদিল্লি এখন
সন্ত্রাস নিয়ন্ত্রণে
পাকিস্তানের কাছে স্পষ্ট
ব্যবস্থা আশা করছে।
আগামিকাল নয়াদিল্লিতে
জম্মু ও কাশ্মীর-সহ
বিভিন্ন বিষয়ে দু'দেশের
বিদেশমন্ত্রীদের সামগ্রিক
আলোচনা হবে। তার
আগে আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রী
মনমোহন সিংহ বুধবার
দিয়েছেন, সন্ত্রাস নিয়ন্ত্রণে
নয়াদিল্লি পাকিস্তানের উপরে চাপ
বাড়াবে।



দিল্লিতে পাক বিদেশমন্ত্রী খুরশিদ মহম্মদ কাসুরি (পিটিআই)

মনমোহন বলেছেন, “পাকিস্তানের মাটিতে কোনও জঙ্গি
কার্যকলাপ চালাতে দেবেন না বলে জানুয়ারিতে পাক-
প্রেসিডেন্ট পরভেজ মুশারফ ঘোষণা করেছিলেন। তার
প্রেক্ষিতেই এই আলোচনা প্রক্রিয়া শুরু হয়। কথা তখনই
এগোতে পারে, যখন সন্ত্রাস নিয়ন্ত্রণে থাকবে। কিন্তু সম্প্রতি
কাশ্মীরে আবার অনুপ্রবেশ এবং জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপ বেড়ে
গিয়েছে। কাল আলোচনার সময়ে আমরা বিষয়টি তুলব।”

প্রধানমন্ত্রী হওয়ার পরে প্রথম সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে
মনমোহন বারবার বলেছেন, কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া
এবং দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের উন্নতির প্রতি দায়বদ্ধ। এ মাসেই
নিউ ইয়র্কে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের সাধারণ অধিবেশনের মনমোহন এবং
মুশারফের বৈঠক হচ্ছে। মনমোহন বলেছেন, শান্তির জন্য
‘সুসংহত’ আলোচনার জন্যই মুশারফের সঙ্গে দেখা করবেন।

আগামিকালের বৈঠকের আগে পাকিস্তানের দিক থেকে
যথার্থি কাশ্মীরকে প্রাধান্য দেওয়ার চেষ্টা শুরু হয়ে
গিয়েছে। আজ বিকেলে নয়াদিল্লি আসার আগে ইসলামাবাদে
এক বিবৃতিতে পাক বিদেশমন্ত্রী খুরশিদ মেহমুদ কাসুরি
বলেছেন, কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধান মোটেই কঠিন কাজ নয়।
রাজনৈতিক সদিচ্ছা থাকলেই এটা সম্ভব। পাকিস্তানের এই
মনোভাবের সামনে ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রীও জানিয়েছেন, তাঁরা
কাশ্মীর নিয়ে আলোচনায় মোটেও পিছপা নন। বরং কাশ্মীর-
সহ সমস্ত বিষয়ে আলোচনার মধ্যে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের
উন্নতি তাঁদের কাম্য।

মনমোহনের কথায়, “সবসময়েই বলেছি, শান্তি প্রক্রিয়ার
প্রতি আমরা দায়বদ্ধ। কিন্তু তা হবে বাস্তবিকতার উপরে

ভিত্তি করে। আমরা
মোটো জম্মু ও কাশ্মীর
নিয়ে আলোচনা এড়াই
না। কিন্তু আমরা এই
মতামতও মানি না যে
একমাত্র এটাই ভারত-
পাক সম্পর্কে প্রভাব
ফেলেছে।” জম্মু-কাশ্মীর
বিষয়ে আলোচনায়
ছরিয়ত-সহ সব গোষ্ঠীর
জন্য দরজা খুলে দিয়ে
প্রধানমন্ত্রী জানিয়েছেন,
সরকার সবার সঙ্গে কথা
বলতে রাজি।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বক্তব্য, জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরে একটি নির্বাচিত
সরকার আছে। যাঁরা নির্বাচিত প্রতিনিধি নন, তাঁদের সঙ্গেও
কথা বলতে আপত্তি নেই। পাকিস্তান অবশ্য রীতি বজায়
রেখে আগামিকাল বিদেশমন্ত্রীর বৈঠকের মাঝে ছরিয়ত
নেতাদের সঙ্গে কথা বলবে। পাক মুখপাত্র মাসুদ খান
বলেছেন, “দু'পক্ষই এই বৈঠক চাইছিল।”

গত প্রায় ছয় মাস যাবৎ ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে যে
আলোচনার প্রক্রিয়া চলছে, তাকে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বলেই মনে
করছেন মনমোহন। বিগত একশো দিনে নতুন সরকার তার
প্রাথমিক দফার কথা সেয়ে নিয়েছে। এই অবস্থায় মনমোহন
বলেছেন, “আমরা ইতিমধ্যেই যা ফল পেয়েছি, তা মোটেও
অকিঞ্চিৎকর নয়। প্রতিটি ধাপে মাপতে হবে কতটা উন্নতি
হল। আমি মিথ্যে ভোরের স্বপ্ন দেখাব না। আমি বিশ্বাস করি,
এক এক পা করে হেঁটে গোটা রাস্তা পার হয়ে আসা যায়।”

আজ সচিব স্তরে আলোচনায় বসেছিল ভারত ও
পাকিস্তানের দুই বিদেশসচিব, শ্যাম সরন এবং রিয়াজ
খোঙ্করের নেতৃত্বাধীন প্রতিনিধি দল। বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের পক্ষ
থেকে বলা হয়েছে, সামগ্রিক আলোচনায় এ যাবৎ দু'পক্ষের
মধ্যে কি কথা হয়েছে, তার ইতিবাচক পর্যালোচনা হয়েছে।
দু'পক্ষই বেশ কিছু কার্যকরী প্রস্তাব দিয়েছে।

সামগ্রিক আলোচনায় আটটি বিষয় অন্তর্ভুক্ত। বিষয়গুলি
হল, শান্তি ও নিরাপত্তা, বিভিন্ন বিশ্বাসবর্ধক পদক্ষেপ, জম্মু ও
কাশ্মীর, সিয়ান, স্যার ক্রিক, সন্ত্রাস ও মাদক প্যাচার,
আর্থিক ও বাণিজ্যিক সহযোগিতা, ওয়ালার বাঁধ এবং বিভিন্ন
ক্ষেত্রে বন্ধুত্বপূর্ণ আদানপ্রদান। কাসুরি আজ বিকেলে দিল্লিতে
এসে বলেন, “বিশ্ব আমাদের দিকে আশা নিয়ে তাকিয়ে
আছে, আমাদের সেই অনুযায়ী কাজ করা উচিত।”

When neighbours meet

By Amit Baruah

INDIA and Pakistan cannot do the small things, can they do the big things? That is the question the two Governments need to answer as they sit down for yet another round of discussions first between the Foreign Secretaries and then the Foreign Ministers.

At the end of June this year, the two countries agreed "in principle" to reopen the Mumbai and Karachi consulates. Two months have passed and the first steps have not been taken by New Delhi and Islamabad to do the needful. Not a single Pakistani High Commission official has travelled to Mumbai so far to identify any properties as planned. While New Delhi had indicated that an official from the mission could travel to Mumbai, the Pakistanis in the capital have asked for help from the Government to locate suitable premises.

At the end of the day, with the Foreign Ministers to meet in New Delhi on September 5-6, no progress has been made in the direction of reopening the consulates (making the Karachi consulate operational is linked to Mumbai). As officials and Ministers prepare for yet another round of India-Pakistan dialogue, the question is: why has progress not been made on reopening the consulates?

So far, the two Foreign Ministers have met three times — in Qingdao, China, in Jakarta and in Islamabad — enough opportunity. There has also

been a "reported" meeting between the National Security Adviser, J.N. Dixit, and his Pakistani counterpart, Tariq Aziz, which would imply the continuance of the Aziz-Brajesh Mishra dialogue track. Mr. Mishra, as Mr. Dixit's predecessor, was key to putting the India-Pakistan dialogue process back on track.

So, contact has been there. Progress on nuclear confidence-building measures, restoring the strength of the High Commissions, and re-open-

ing the consulates was agreed to in June. This was when the Foreign Secretaries met to discuss Kashmir and peace and security, including confidence-building measures.

Agreements can take place "in principle", but putting them in operation is a separate ball game. High-sounding accords that raise expectations among the people must be backed by concrete action. To be sure, articulate Indian and Pakistani officials will be able to provide enough excuses why there has been no progress on the consulate issue. The consulate issue is just one of many. In every area, even when India and Pakistan agree on something,

the consulates was agreed to in June. This was when the Foreign Secretaries met to discuss Kashmir and peace and security, including confidence-building measures.

When Gen. Musharraf agreed to the January statement, the ghost of Abdul Qadeer Khan and his peddling of nuclear weapons' secrets was already haunting him — but this wasn't known to all and sundry at the time.

Today, the General has been able to ride out the Qadeer Khan storm by his effective assistance to the United States in combating the Al Qaeda elements in Pakistan. He is under no pressure to make further concessions to India. A return to the 'Kashmir

first' approach can now be expected. This is not to say that Pakistan will break off the bilateral dialogue with India. But, today it wants India to show "comfort" to the people of Kashmir. Its "no passport" stance for travellers using a possible Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service is a sign that the Pakistani position is hardening.

Public statements emanating from Islamabad and New Delhi in recent days, too, have not been positive.

While all this may not have clouded the prospects of an India-Pakistan rapprochement, the fact is that the Foreign Ministers' dialogue is unlikely to produce the big steps needed to take the process forward. Under the Vajpayee Government, the formal dialogue was the "front" with the real decisions having been taken in advance in the Aziz-Mishra dialogue. In the India-Pakistan scheme, the "pre-cooked" meal goes down best. Usually this means that when India and Pakistan want to show progress, their officials meet before hand to work out details of what is to be announced. For the sake of the dialogue process, one can only hope that the "pre-cooked" mechanism has been used on this occasion as well.

This, of course, does not detract from implementing decisions that have already been taken. Like reopening the Mumbai and Karachi consulates.

The coming meeting of the Foreign Ministers of India and Pakistan is unlikely to produce the big steps needed to take the dialogue process forward.

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Kasuri expresses concern over Indian statements

Indo-pak

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 30. Pakistan's former Foreign Minister and Ambassador-at-large Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri has expressed concern over what he calls an "emerging pattern of accusatory statements from high officials" in India against his country prior to the crucial round of talks at the level of Foreign Ministers between the two countries scheduled in New Delhi for September 5 and 6.

Talking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Kasuri, who is expected to be re-inducted as Foreign Minister by the new Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, on September 1, said that finger-pointing did not augur well for the composite dialogue and reiterated his call for a "rhetoric-restraint regime."

Mr. Kasuri was responding to questions on the statement made by the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, on Indian concerns over the rise in cross-border infiltration and Islamabad's approach to the talks scheduled in New Delhi.

Healthy talks

"Of course I would persist in promoting a healthy and result-oriented dialogue with India on all issues including Jammu and Kashmir. I am going to New

Delhi with total confidence. Since the people of India, Pakistan and Kashmir have expressed an overwhelming desire for peace, hopefully the leaders of the two countries would rise to the occasion," Mr. Kasuri said.

He said that people in Pakistan and foreign countries had been asking him to interpret the hostile statements emanating

from Indian leaders. "I have been telling them I have no answer to the query and directing them to pose the question to the Indian leaders," he said.

In the interest of the ongoing composite dialogue he would not like add anything to the response given by the Pakistan Foreign Office to the latest statements attributed to Mr. Singh. Mr. Kasuri said the Pakis-

tan President, Pervez Musharraf, and Mr. Aziz — in his first speech after being sworn-in — had expressed the resolve to carry forward the dialogue process to positive conclusion. "Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in his congratulatory message to Mr. Aziz has expressed similar sentiments and we are encouraged by his statement."

Reports on extradition treaty denied

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 30. Pakistan has denied reports that India has proposed an extradition treaty, which "it rejected."

At the weekly news briefing today, the Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Masood Khan, maintained that since there was no proposal from India for such a treaty, the question of its rejection did not arise.

To a question, he said that differences on cross-border terrorism publicly aired by both countries would not have any impact on the talks between the Indian External Affairs Minister, K. Natwar Singh and his counterpart,

Khurshid M. Kasuri, scheduled to be held on September 5 and 6 in New Delhi.

'Lower rhetoric'

Rejecting India's assertion that cross-border terrorism was continuing, Mr. Khan said, "it [differences] will not have impact on the talks. The mood here is to engage the Indians in a constructive manner. It would be in the interest of both the countries to lower the rhetoric and seriously pursue negotiations. These are very important talks. We should not try to pollute the talks before going for these talks."

The two Foreign Ministers would look at the prospect of

making progress and continuing the dialogue process, he said.

'Review progress'

Mr. Khan said the two sides would have comprehensive discussions on the entire agenda of eight points, including peace and security and Jammu and Kashmir. They would review the progress of their engagement.

Mr. Khan categorically stated that Pakistan and India were not negotiating to give permanent status to the line of

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Sustaining the peace process

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, AUG. 29. As they prepare for the first structured bilateral political negotiations in more than four decades, the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, and his Pakistani counterpart, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, should be fully aware of the rising popular expectations across the border.

The dismal history of India-Pakistan relations, however, induces a large dose of caution. Although both the Governments might genuinely want a sustainable peace process, they could squander the current opportunity by resorting to a "wait and watch" policy.

To be sure, it would not be difficult for the two Foreign Ministers to announce a continuation of the current engagement after reviewing the discussions between the officials on all bilateral issues over the last few weeks. But can they inject some real life into it?

Indian and Pakistan political leaders have met at the highest levels many times over the decades; but last time the two sides engaged each other on an extended basis was during 1962-63. The two Foreign Ministers then were Sardar Swaran Singh and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

The failure of the talks then led to the India-Pakistan war of 1965. The danger that India and Pakistan will slide back to yet another cycle of violent tension is a real possibility. The rub, as in 1962-63, remains Kashmir.

Reciprocal steps

The current peace process hinges on the political deal that the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, and the then Indian Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, made at Islamabad last January — a purposeful negotiation on Kashmir in a violence-free environment.

Despite Indian assurances since then on a "sustained and serious" dialogue on Kashmir, Pakistan has expressed concerns about the will and capability of the Congress-led coalition in New Delhi to pursue productive negotiations. In-

dia, on the other hand, has questions on Gen. Musharraf's intent and ability to create a violence-free environment in Kashmir.

Irrespective of who is in power, New Delhi could not have ignored the signals from Islamabad that violence will remain a political lever for Pakistan in the Kashmir negotiations.

India, along with the rest of the world, acknowledges that Gen. Musharraf, at some risk to his own life, has taken on the Al-Qaeda in Pakistan. But New Delhi and other Western capitals are fully aware that Gen. Musharraf has been reluctant to crack down on the remnants of the Taliban and Kashmir-related terrorist groups.

DIPLOMATIC NOTEBOOK

There is a broad agreement among the observers of Pakistan that the Army there is unwilling to give up on the strategic investments it has made in Afghanistan and Kashmir over the last two decades.

India and Pakistan can, however, provide each other some reassurance through unilateral actions. Gen. Musharraf must act against the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Hizbul Mujahideen, two specific Kashmir-related groups that operate under State patronage in Pakistan.

New Delhi on its part should take steps to improve the human rights situation in Kashmir. By withdrawing some of the draconian laws operating in Kashmir and altering the disposition of its security forces there, India can reinforce its political commitment to engage Pakistan in a substantive dialogue on Kashmir.

Kashmir CBMs

Equally important are other CBMs in Kashmir that will allow the creation of linkages between the people and institutions across the divide in Jammu and Kashmir. In the talks between their foreign secretaries last June, India and Pakistan exchanged a number of proposals for confidence build-

ing on Kashmir. An agreement between the two Foreign Ministers to move forward on transport links across the Line of Control in Kashmir — between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad — could help create a positive environment in the State for the peace process.

Having put this idea on the table, India should take the initiative to demonstrate flexibility on the question of travel documents. Instead of insisting on the use of passports, India should agree to negotiate with Pakistan on the kind of official certifications from the local Governments that could facilitate travel across the LoC.

Missile tests

India's testing of the Agni-II missile today is unlikely to have an impact on the talks between the two Foreign Ministers. The Congress Government had made light of a series of missile tests conducted by Pakistan within days after it was sworn in at the end of May.

New Delhi had also noted the statements of Gen. Musharraf a few weeks ago that Pakistan plans to conduct an important missile test in the near future. New Delhi and Islamabad at present inform each other about their impending missile tests. In June, India had handed over to Pakistan a draft agreement on pre-notification of ballistic missile testing. At their meeting, the two Foreign Ministers should announce the intention to sign the agreement.

Gas pipeline

The Union Minister for Petroleum, Mani Shankar Aiyar, has strongly recommended a modification of the current Indian opposition to importing natural gas through Pakistani territory. Instead of rejecting the idea, he has proposed a "conversation without commitment" on the natural gas pipelines with Pakistan.

Mr. Aiyar is expected to host a luncheon for Mr. Kasuri — an old friend and classmate from Cambridge, England. Mr. Aiyar will hopefully have some good news to offer at the table.

চাপে রাখার কৌশল ভারত জুড়ে সন্ত্রাসের ছক পাকিস্তানের

২২ অগস্ট: ভারতকে চাপে রাখতে কাশ্মীর, উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের রাজ্যগুলি-সহ দেশের নানা প্রান্তে নাশকতামূলক কাজকর্ম চালানোর পরিকল্পনা করছে পাকিস্তান।

কেন্দ্রীয় গোয়েন্দা বাহিনীর প্রধান অজিত ডোভাল এই মর্মে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ, স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল এবং জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা জে এন দীক্ষিতের কাছে বিস্তারিত রিপোর্ট পাঠিয়েছেন। মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটির বৈঠকেও পাকিস্তানের এই ভূমিকা নিয়ে বিশদে আলোচনা হয়েছে।

সেপ্টেম্বরে নিউ ইয়র্কে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে নির্ধারিত বৈঠকের আগেই পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ দিল্লিকে প্রবল কূটনৈতিক চাপে ফেলে দিতে চাইছেন। তার আগে ৪ সেপ্টেম্বর ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের বিদেশসচিব শ্যাম শরণ ও রিয়াজ খোন্ধর দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকে বসছেন। ৫ ও ৬ সেপ্টেম্বর দুই দেশের বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ ও খুরশিদ মহম্মদ কাসুরি দিল্লিতেই দু'দিনের বৈঠকে বসছেন। এর পর সেপ্টেম্বরের মাঝামাঝি রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের সাধারণ সভায় যোগ দিতে গিয়ে মনমোহন নিউ ইয়র্কে মুশারফের সঙ্গে প্রথমবার বৈঠক করবেন।

পাকিস্তান ভারতের 'ধীরে চলো' নীতি পছন্দ করছে না বলেই আবার পাক গোয়েন্দা সংস্থা আই এস আই সক্রিয় হয়ে উঠছে। সেনা গোয়েন্দারাও প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়কে রিপোর্ট দিয়ে জানিয়েছেন পাক জঙ্গি অনুপ্রবেশ ফের প্রায় দ্বিগুণ হয়ে উঠেছে। কেবল জুলাই মাসেই অনুপ্রবেশের ১৭টি চেষ্টা বার্থ করে দেওয়া হয়েছে, ৩৫ জন জঙ্গিকে হত্যা করা হয়েছে। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের বার্ষিক রিপোর্টেও বলা হয়েছে যে পাকিস্তান ফের ছায়াযুদ্ধকে তীব্র করে তুলেছে। কাশ্মীর, উত্তরপূর্বাঞ্চল-সহ দেশের নানা প্রান্তে নাশকতামূলক কাজকর্ম বাড়িয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে। তবে এই ধরনের নাশকতা রুখতে সরকার সবরকম ব্যবস্থা নিচ্ছে।

অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী যখন প্রধানমন্ত্রী ছিলেন তখনই কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধান নিয়ে আলোচনা অনেকটা এগিয়ে গিয়েছিল। মুশারফ ভেবেছিলেন ভোটের পর দিল্লিতে নতুন সরকার এলে কাশ্মীর সমস্যা নিয়ে দ্রুত যেন-তেন প্রকারে ভারতের সঙ্গে চুক্তি করে নেওয়া যাবে। কিন্তু মনমোহন সিংহ প্রধানমন্ত্রী হওয়ার পর পাকিস্তান সম্পর্কে বিদেশমন্ত্রক কিছুটা 'ধীরে চলো' নীতি নিয়েছে। মনমোহন-সরকারের কৌশল হল, পাকিস্তান সম্পর্কে নরম মনোভাব পোষণ না করা। কূটনৈতিক দর কষাকষির রাস্তা খোলা রেখেই সে দেশের সঙ্গে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ককে ইতিবাচক পথে এগিয়ে নিয়ে চলা।

কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্বও দেখাতে চান পাকিস্তানের প্রশ্নে তাঁরা বিজেপি-র চেয়েও বেশি জাতীয়তাবাদী। নটবর ইসলামাবাদে গিয়ে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট ও বিদেশমন্ত্রককে জানিয়েও দিয়ে আসেন যে ভারত অবশ্যই পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে সুসম্পর্ক চায়, কিন্তু এত বছরের সমস্যার কোনও চটজলদি সমাধান বের করতেও তারা ব্যগ্র নয়।

দিল্লির এই নতুন ধরনের আচরণে ইসলামাবাদ ক্ষুব্ধ। ক্ষুব্ধ মুশারফ সম্প্রতি 'ডন' সংবাদপত্রকে দেওয়া এক সাক্ষাৎকারে বলেছেন, সময়সীমা বেঁধে দেওয়ার কথা তিনি বলেননি। কিন্তু কাশ্মীর সমস্যার দ্রুত সমাধান চান তিনি। ভারত ঠিক কী চাইছে তিনি বুঝতে পারছেন না। উদ্বিগ্ন প্রেসিডেন্ট এর মধ্যে একবার ভারতের প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীকেও ফোন করেছিলেন। পাকিস্তানের ভারী প্রধানমন্ত্রী শওকত আজিজও বলেছেন, দেশের প্রধানমন্ত্রী হয়ে তাঁর প্রথম ও প্রধান কাজ হবে কাশ্মীরি জনগণের প্রত্যাশার কথা ভেবে ভারতের সঙ্গে 'শান্তি-আলোচনা' শুরু করা। বৃশ প্রশাসনও ব্যাপারটায় খুশি নয়। বিদেশমন্ত্রকের এক কূটনৈতিকের মন্তব্য, "ওভাল অফিসে কোন ভারতীয় প্রতিনিধিকে বসতে দেওয়া হল, তার নিরিখে আমরা আর বিদেশনীতির সাফল্য নির্ধারণ করব না।"

বিদেশমন্ত্রকের কর্তাদের বক্তব্য, ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের মৈত্রী তাঁরাও চান। কিন্তু তার জন্য ধৈর্য ধরে আলোচনার মাধ্যমে জট ছাড়াতে হবে। সাংস্কৃতিক ও বাণিজ্যিক ক্ষেত্রে আদানপ্রদান আগে বাড়াতে হবে। এই সমস্ত আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থাই সমস্যা সমাধানে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা নেবে। কিন্তু তাড়াহুড়ো করে স্থায়ী সমাধান পাওয়া যাবে না। আসলে ভারত চায় আলোচনার ক্ষেত্রে চিনের উদাহরণ অনুসরণ করতে। যেখানে এক দিকে সীমান্ত বিরোধ নিয়ে আলোচনা চলবে, অন্য দিকে, বাণিজ্যিক ও সাংস্কৃতিক সম্পর্ক সজীব রাখা হবে।

ANADARAZAN RAJ

জেনিভায় দেশের স্বার্থ রক্ষা হয়েছে, দাবি কমলনাথের

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৬
অগস্ট: জেনিভায় বিশ্ব বাণিজ্য সংস্থা
ডব্লিউ টি ও-র বৈঠকে রফতানি ভর্তুকি
কমানোর দাবি উন্নত দেশগুলির মেনে
নেওয়াই বড় সাফল্য বলে জানিয়েছেন
বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী কমলনাথ। জেনিভায়
দেশের স্বার্থ রক্ষিত হয়নি বলে
বিজেপি-র সমালোচনার মুখে আজ
রাজ্যসভায় এক বিবৃতিতে কমলনাথ
বলেছেন, শুধু রফতানি ভর্তুকি
কমানোই নয়, জেনিভার বৈঠকে এমন
অনেক সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছে, যা
উন্নয়নশীল দেশের স্বার্থ রক্ষা করবে।
আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্যের ক্ষেত্রে বড় বাধা
অভ্যন্তরীণ ভর্তুকি কমিয়ে আনা,
উন্নয়নশীল দেশের তুলনায় উন্নত
দেশের ভর্তুকি বেশি পরিমাণে কমানো,
নির্দিষ্ট সংখ্যক পণ্যকে বিশেষ পণ্যের
তালিকাভুক্ত করা, উন্নয়নশীল দেশের
অভ্যন্তরীণ পণ্যের জন্য রক্ষাকবচের
ব্যবস্থা ইত্যাদি এমন অনেক সিদ্ধান্ত
নেওয়া হয়েছে, যা ভারতের মতো
উন্নয়নশীল দেশের স্বার্থ রক্ষা করবে।

কমলনাথের বক্তব্য, জেনিভায়
পরিকাঠামো চুক্তিতে ঠিক হয়েছে,
একটা সময়সীমার মধ্যে সব ধরনের
রফতানি ভর্তুকি বন্ধ করা হবে। দীর্ঘ
দিন ধরেই ভারতের এটা অন্যতম
প্রধান দাবি ছিল। উন্নত দেশগুলি
কৃষিজাত পণ্যে রফতানি ভর্তুকির জন্য
হাজার হাজার কোটি ডলার খরচ
করে। এর ফলে কৃষিজাত পণ্যের দাম
কৃত্রিম ভাবে অনেক কম রাখা সম্ভব
হয়। তাই এই সিদ্ধান্ত উন্নয়নশীল
দেশের বড় প্রাপ্তি। একই সঙ্গে
ভারতের মতো উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলির
এ ক্ষেত্রে কিছুটা ছাড় থাকবে।
উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলি আরও বেশি সময়
ধরে কৃষিজাত পণ্যে রফতানি ভর্তুকি
চালু রাখতে পারবে। এমনকী
আমেরিকা 'ব্লু বক্স' বলে যে ভর্তুকি
দেয়, তার পরিমাণও প্রথম বছরে পাঁচ
শতাংশ কমাতে হবে। তবে এই বার ব্লু
বক্সের পরিধি আরও বাড়ানো হয়েছে
এবং 'গ্রিন বক্স' বা পরিবেশগত কারণে
আমেরিকা যে ভর্তুকি দেয়, তা কৃষি
ভর্তুকির আওতার বাইরে নিয়ে যাওয়া
হয়েছে বলে বিজেপি-র অভিযোগ।
ফলে আদতে আমেরিকাকে ভর্তুকি
কমাতে হচ্ছে না। কমলনাথ অবশ্য এ
ব্যাপারে কোনও মন্তব্য করেননি।

অন্য দেশের বাজারে ঢোকান
ক্ষেত্রে কমলনাথের বক্তব্য, চুক্তিতে
ঠিক হয়েছে, যে দেশে কৃষিজাত পণ্যে
যত বেশি ভর্তুকি, তাদের তত বেশি
হারে তা কমাতে হবে। উন্নত দেশের
ভর্তুকির পরিমাণ অনেক বেশি বলে
তাদের ভর্তুকি বেশি ছাঁটাই করতে

হবে। তুলনায় উন্নয়নশীল দেশের
ভর্তুকি কম হারে কমাতে হবে।
উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলি আরও একটি
সুবিধা পাচ্ছে, তা হল, কিছু পণ্যকে
বিশেষ পণ্যের মর্যাদা দেওয়া হচ্ছে।
দেশের খাদ্য ও জীবনধারণের সুরক্ষা
ও গ্রামোন্নয়নের চাহিদার উপর ভিত্তি
করে এই তালিকা তৈরি হবে। চুক্তিতে
বলা হয়েছে, উন্নয়নশীল দেশের
গ্রামোন্নয়নের চাহিদার কথা মাথায়
রেখে পরবর্তী আলোচনা চলবে।
কমলনাথের দাবি, কানকুনের
মতো জেনিভাতেও ভারত জি-২০
দেশগুলির সঙ্গে আলোচনা করেই
এগিয়েছে। বিশেষ পণ্যের ক্ষেত্রে তো
৩৩টি দেশ একযোগে কাজ করেছে।
সব থেকে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা নিয়েছিল
ভারত, ব্রাজিল, অস্ট্রেলিয়া, আমেরিকা
ও ইউরোপিয়ান ইউনিয়ন। ভারতের
স্বার্থ রেখে ভবিষ্যতে আলোচনার
প্রতিশ্রুতিও দিয়েছেন বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী।

রাজনৈতিক সমস্যাকেই অগ্রাধিকার ভারতকে এমএফএন স্বীকৃতি দিতে রাজি নয় পাকিস্তান

ইসলামাবাদ, ১২ অগস্ট: ভারতকে সর্বাধিক বাণিজ্য সুবিধাপ্রাপ্ত রাষ্ট্র বা এম এফ এনের স্বীকৃতি দিতে রাজি হল না পাকিস্তান। আজ এখানে দু'দিনের বাণিজ্য বৈঠক শেষে পাকিস্তান সাফ জানিয়ে দিয়েছে, কাশ্মীর-সহ সমস্ত রাজনৈতিক সমস্যা নিয়ে সমাধানসূত্রে পৌঁছতে কথাবার্তা আরও এগোনো না-পর্যন্ত তারা ভারতকে এই সুবিধা দিতে পারবে না। উল্লেখ্য, ভারত কিন্তু আগেই পাকিস্তানকে এম এফ এনের স্বীকৃতি দিয়েছে। সার্কের অন্তর্গত দেশ হিসাবে ভারত তাদের ওই সুবিধা মঞ্জুর করেছে।

‘রাজনৈতিক আলাপ-আলোচনা অব্যাহত রেখে’ ঐকমত্যে পৌঁছানোর পথ প্রশস্ত করাকেই ভারতের এম এফ এন স্বীকৃতি পাওয়ার পূর্বশর্ত হিসাবে ধরার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে পাকিস্তান। আর্থিক ও বাণিজ্যিক সহযোগিতা বাড়ানোর বিভিন্ন প্রস্তাব খতিয়ে দেখতে দু’পক্ষই রাজি হওয়া সত্ত্বেও পাকিস্তান স্পষ্ট ভাষায় জানিয়ে দিয়েছে, রাজনৈতিক বিষয়গুলির মীমাংসার ব্যাপারে ধারাবাহিক ভাবে কথা চালিয়ে যেতে আগে দুটি রাষ্ট্রকে এক জায়গায় আসতে হবে।

পাকিস্তানের বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী ছমায়ুন আখতার ভারতের বাণিজ্য সচিব দীপক চট্টোপাধ্যায়কে গত রাতেই বলেন, “ভারতকে বাণিজ্য সুবিধাপ্রাপ্ত রাষ্ট্রের মর্যাদা দেওয়ার বিষয়টি বিবেচনা করতে পাকিস্তান প্রস্তুত। তবে তার আগে রাজনৈতিক সমাধানে পৌঁছানোর প্রক্রিয়া ঠিক ভাবে শুরু হওয়া চাই। অর্থাৎ রাজনৈতিক আলোচনা এগিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়ার মতো পরিস্থিতি তৈরি হলে তবেই ভারতকে ওই মর্যাদা দেওয়া হবে।” পাকিস্তানের সরকারি সংবাদসংস্থা সূত্রেই এ কথা জানানো হয়েছে। পাকিস্তানের তরফ থেকে ভারতকে এম এফ এনের স্বীকৃতি দেওয়া উচিত, দীপকবাবুর এই প্রস্তাবের পরেই পাক মন্ত্রী এ কথা জানিয়ে দেন।

তবে আর্থিক ও বাণিজ্যিক সহযোগিতা বাড়ানো নিয়ে দীপকবাবুর সঙ্গে পাক বাণিজ্য সচিব তসনিম নুরানির বন্ধুত্বপূর্ণ আলোচনা হয়েছে বলে বৈঠক শেষে দু’দেশের যৌথ বিবৃতিতে জানানো হয়েছে। বাণিজ্য নিয়ে দু’তরফেরই যে সমস্ত শঙ্কা রয়েছে, তা কাটাতে দু’পক্ষ একটি কর্মী গোষ্ঠী ও যৌথ বাণিজ্য পরিষদ গঠনেও সম্মত হয়েছে।

এ ছাড়া শান্তি ও নিরাপত্তা, কাশ্মীর, সিয়ানেন, উগ্রপন্থা, মাদক পাচারের মতো বিষয় নিয়েও দু’দিনের এই বৈঠকে

আলোচনা হয়। এই সমস্ত বিষয় নিয়ে পরবর্তী স্তরের বৈঠক হবে দু’দেশের বিদেশমন্ত্রী পর্যায়ের। আগামী ৫ ও ৬ সেপ্টেম্বর নয়াদিল্লিতে ওই বৈঠকের দিন ধার্য হয়েছে বলে সরকারি সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে।

দ্বিপাক্ষিক বাণিজ্য বাড়াতে পাকিস্তান ভারতকে ৫০টির মতো প্রস্তাব দিয়েছে বলে জানানো হয়েছে। সহযোগিতার ক্ষেত্রগুলির মধ্যে রয়েছে: টেলিযোগাযোগ, কৃষি, অসামরিক বিমান পরিবহন, স্বাস্থ্য, তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি। এ ছাড়া রয়েছে, বাংলাদেশ, শ্রীলঙ্কার মতো সার্ক রাষ্ট্রে পাকিস্তানকে ভারতের মধ্যে দিয়ে বাণিজ্য শুরু করার অনুমতি। বিনিময়ে ভারত আফগানিস্তান এবং মধ্য এশিয়ার দেশগুলিতে বাণিজ্যের সুযোগ করে দেওয়ার দাবি জানিয়েছে।

বিমান পরিবহনের ক্ষেত্রে সপ্তাহে ১৪টি উড়ান চালু করার কথা যৌথ বিবৃতিতে বলা হয়েছে। বর্তমানে দু’টি করে শহরে বিমান পরিষেবা দেওয়া হয়। তাতে আরও একটি করে শহর যোগ করার প্রস্তাবও রয়েছে। যেমন, বর্তমানে ইন্ডিয়ান এয়ারলাইন্স লাহোর ও করাচির উড়ান চালায়। পাকিস্তান ইন্টারন্যাশনাল এয়ারলাইন্সের উড়ান রয়েছে নয়াদিল্লি ও মুম্বইয়ে। পাকিস্তান এ বার হায়দরাবাদেও উড়ান শুরু করার প্রস্তাব দিয়েছে। ভারতকে তারা ইসলামাবাদে উড়ান চালু করে দেওয়ার প্রস্তাবও দিয়েছে।

অন্য দিকে পাকিস্তানে সি এন জি চালিত গাড়ি তৈরি শুরু করতে আগ্রহী ভারত। এ ব্যাপারে টাটা গোষ্ঠী লাহোরের একটি সংস্থার সঙ্গে ইতিমধ্যেই কথাবার্তা শুরু করেছে। পাকিস্তানের মধ্য দিয়ে যে ইরান-ভারত গ্যাস পাইপলাইন তৈরি হওয়ার কথা, সে ব্যাপারে ভারতকে এ বার আরও বেশি উদ্যমী হতেও বলেছে পাকিস্তান। ইসলামাবাদ এই প্রকল্পের নিরাপত্তা একশো ভাগ সুনিশ্চিত করার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছে।

চলতি বছরে পাকিস্তানে ভারতের রফতানি ৩০ কোটি ডলার। ভারতে পাকিস্তানের রফতানি ৮ কোটি ডলারের মতো। তৃতীয় দেশের মাধ্যমে (যেমন, সংযুক্ত আরব আমিরশাহি) বাণিজ্যের যে-বাবস্থা বর্তমানে চালু রয়েছে, তার বদলে সরাসরি বাণিজ্য চালু হয়ে গেলে লেনদেন ৪০০ কোটি ডলারে পৌঁছে যাবে বলে ভারতীয় অফিসারেরা পূর্বাভাস দিয়েছেন।

— পি টি আই

ANADARAZAR DATEKA

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India, Pakistan resolve to end terrorism

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 11. At the end of the two-day official level talks on terrorism and drug trafficking, India and Pakistan today reaffirmed their determination to combat terrorism and emphasised the need to completely eliminate this menace.

A joint press statement, adopted at the conclusion of the parleys on the difficult and sensitive subject as part of the composite dialogue, signalled that both sides are committed to stay on the dialogue track. Difficulties on the subject could be gauged from the fact that both sides have serious differences on the definition of terrorism.

Musharraf's statement

The commitment to combat terrorism certainly does not square up with the latest statement of the Pakistan President,

Pervez Musharraf, that Kashmir-centric 'jehadi outfits' in Pakistan would have to 'pack up' if Islamabad arrives at a settlement with New Delhi on Kashmir.

India's concern

Behind the closed doors, the Indian delegation led by Home Secretary, Dharendra Singh, conveyed New Delhi's concern over the failure of Pakistan Government to move significantly towards dismantling of terrorist infrastructure as well as infiltration across the Line of Control (LoC), which has seen a spurt in June/July.

Pakistan raised the alleged anti-Pakistan activities of the Indian Consulates in the border cities of Afghanistan and the 'machinations' of Indian intelligence agencies in different parts of the country to disturb peace.

Predictably both sides vehemently denied the charges and moved on with the agenda.

India raised the issue of the 'inaction' of Pakistan's Government in locating and extraditing 20 persons, wanted in India in connection with various crimes, allegedly sheltered in Pakistan. These included the hijackers of the Indian Airlines plane to Kandahar in December 1999 along with three militants released by New Delhi in exchange for the freedom of the passengers. The delegation gave a list of another five wanted in India and suspected to be hiding in Pakistan. Pakistan handed over a list of 53 persons wanted by it in connection with various crimes and allegedly sheltered in India.

Narcotics control

The joint press statement assessed as positive the increasing

cooperation and information sharing between their narcotics control authorities and agreed to work towards a MoU to institutionalise cooperation in this area.

449 Indians to be freed

Pakistan said it would soon release 449 Indian prisoners, a majority of them fishermen who were detained for allegedly entering the country's territorial waters.

State-run Pakistan Television announced in its evening bulletin that the Pakistan Government would release 41 Indian prisoners in Pakistani jails for visa violations on August 25. Also, India would have consular access to 408 fishermen held in Karachi on the charges of illegally entering Pakistani waters for fishing. They would be released after the completion of the formalities, it said.

Trade-off on transit

By C. Raja Mohan

A decision by India and Pakistan to offer each other transit facilities for energy and goods will in one stroke reorder the geopolitics of the region.

INDIA AND Pakistan have an opportunity this week to complete their first round of composite dialogue with a bold new economic initiative. If there is one single big idea that could transform India-Pakistan relations it is transit. A decision to offer each other transit facilities across their borders for energy and goods will in one stroke reorder the geopolitics of the western subcontinent, Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. If India and Pakistan are ready to pursue their own enlightened economic interests, they will seize the moment to cut a simple deal on transit at their talks on economic cooperation this week.

Let us take a look at where India and Pakistan stand on transit trade. India is keen on overland trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia through Pakistan. Islamabad has been unwilling so far to provide such facility for India. Pakistan, however, offers transit the other way in moving natural gas through pipelines from Iran and Central Asia. Here it has been India's turn to say "no." The current negotiating positions of the two sides mean they are open to one-way transit — that is most advantageous to them. A comprehensive deal in which both sides agree to two-way transit could bring many benefits.

For one, granting such mutual transit will restore natural trade routes within the subcontinent and across it. India now transports its goods to Afghanistan and Central Asia along a circuitous route through Iran. Without access to the pre-Partition trade routes between the Indo-Gangetic plain and the western outreaches of the subcontinent, India is involved in developing a variety of expensive transport corridors that go around Pakistan.

Islamabad, in turn, has to circumnavigate peninsular India to get its products into Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Myanmar. A deal on transit will open the western and central parts of Asia to India and the eastern and southeastern parts of the continent to Pakistan. When that happens it is not merely Indian and Pakistani goods that will traverse the subcontinent. The rich economies of Europe as well as East Asia will be able to use the transport corridors across the subcontinent. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh will gain access to each other as well as collect revenues from the larger flows of trade from other nations across their territories.

Until recent history complicated it,

the subcontinent used to be the crossroads of civilisations and trans-continental commerce. But the post-Partition divisions in the subcontinent have choked these transport corridors. Pre-existing road and rail links across the new frontiers of South Asia have been laid to waste. Having pursued a "beggar thy neighbour" policy for decades, India and Pakistan will have to do very little now to create shared prosperity in the region. They just have to unlock the transport links across their nations.

Second, once they agree to open up transport corridors, they cannot continue to block energy pipelines. Pakistan has been keen on building natural gas pipelines from Iran and Central Asia to service the Indian market. If Pakistan chooses to combine that proposal with an offer on transit in the other direction for Indian goods, New Delhi will find it hard to say "no". Until now India has had two main arguments against natural gas pipelines through Pakistan.

One relates to security. Pipelines everywhere in the turbulent developing world have security problems. A pipeline through Baluchistan will in fact be vulnerable to attacks. But so have been India's pipelines on its own territory moving energy from the mainland to the Northeast. If the security problems with pipelines are endemic, there are a variety of solutions — legal means and insurance cover among others — to limit the costs of potential disruption of supplies. These instruments have been effectively employed in other volatile parts of the world.

The other Indian argument has been about reciprocity. New Delhi says there is a long list of decisions on economic cooperation the two sides have to take in restoring normal and mutually beneficial engagement. India insists that Islamabad cannot cherry pick on items of specific interest to it. India has hinted in the past that it could reconsider its approach to the pipeline if Pakistan is prepared for a broader range of economic cooperation. If Islamabad were ready for transit of goods and energy in both directions across its territory, many of India's objections would have been met.

Third, trade and transit across the South Asian frontiers will put India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in a win-win situation in geopolitical terms. The President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, has often declared that he wants to utilise Pakistan's geopolitical location at the crossroads of Asia to national economic advantage. Until now Pakistan has sought to use its location to gain strategic advantages *vis-à-vis* India. If Pakistan chooses to become an economic bridge — a role for which it is naturally positioned — between the subcontinent and the western and northwestern parts of Asia, it will significantly enhance its own regional standing.

Fourth, trade and transit between India and Pakistan would also help reduce the sense of political rivalry in Afghanistan. Both New Delhi and Islamabad have high stakes in cultivating enduring relations with Afghanistan. At present, in trying to neutralise each other, they both diminish themselves. If India and Pakistan begin to pursue economic cooperation in self-interest, Afghanistan will be partner to both. A trade and transit treaty involving New Delhi, Islamabad and Kabul is a natural objective the three sides should aim at achieving.

Fifth, if India and Pakistan allow transit trade across their territories it goes without saying that they would exploit the suppressed potential for trade between the two Punjabs and between other regions such as Sindh in Pakistan and Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra in India. All these regions were part of a single economic space and it was post-Partition politics that prevented natural commercial exchange between these territories.

At a recent conference in Islamabad, the former Pakistan Finance Minister and an internationally reputed economist, Shahid Javed Burki, argued that a deliberate and uninhibited opening up of trade links with India would add three percentage points to the annual growth rate in Pakistan. India in general and its bordering regions with Pakistan in particular will benefit immensely

from a liberalised trading regime with Pakistan. But to realise the full potential trade between India and Pakistan both sides must put in place some basic infrastructure.

These would include permission for national banks of either country to operate on the other side, promotion of shipping links, upgrading of transport corridors, improving the communication links, and greater cooperation between the national stock exchanges. At the talks on economic cooperation this week in Islamabad, India must offer to negotiate new agreements as well as unilateral gestures to break the current negative mindsets that are preventing mutually beneficial economic cooperation.

The level of commercial exchanges between the two nations is at such a primitive level that it does not take much for both sides to make a success of the talks on economic cooperation. Any movement forward in these talks will provide the much-needed chapeau for the first round of the dialogue. This composite and integrated dialogue is premised on the assumption that the two nations will simultaneously move on the resolution of the question of Jammu and Kashmir and move towards a complete normalisation of bilateral relations.

On its part, India had promised at the end of June during the talks between the two Foreign Secretaries that it was prepared for a "serious and sustained" dialogue on the Kashmir question. It is up to Pakistan now to offer satisfaction to India on issues of concern to it. On the question of increasing people-to-people contact, Islamabad has responded positively to the Indian suggestions and come up with some of its own. A similar response on trade and commercial exchanges will dramatically improve the prospects of the peace process.

In the past, Pakistan has conveyed ambiguous signals on expanding trade links. But the latest hints from Islamabad are that Pakistan has been clearing the decks for a more positive approach towards economic cooperation with India. On its part, New Delhi should seize the moment to articulate a broad vision on transforming economic relations with its western neighbour. If Pakistan responds constructively, India will have reason to hope that the peace process will survive well beyond the first round. If Pakistan holds back, New Delhi would have to hedge its own bets on the longevity of the current engagement with Islamabad.

বিমান ছিনতাই, মুম্বই বিস্ফোরণে দোষীদের প্রত্যর্পণে চাপ ভারতের

ইসলামাবাদ, ১০ অগস্ট: ১৯৯৩ সালের মুম্বই বিস্ফোরণ ও ১৯৯৯ সালে ইন্ডিয়ান এয়ারলাইন্সের বিমান ছিনতাইয়ের ঘটনায় অভিযুক্তদের প্রত্যর্পণের জন্য পাকিস্তানের উপরে চাপ সৃষ্টি করল ভারত। ভারতীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিব ধীরেন্দ্র সিংহ ও পাকিস্তানি স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিব তারিক মহমুদের মধ্যে দু'দিনের বৈঠক আজ শুরু হয়েছে। আড়াই ঘণ্টার আলোচনায় আজ সন্ত্রাস ও মাদক চোরাচালান প্রভৃতি বিষয়ে বিস্তারিত আলোচনা হয়। কাল এই বৈঠক শেষ হওয়ার পরে দু'পক্ষ একটি যৌথ বিবৃতি দেবে বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে। যদিও ভারত যে বিষয়গুলিতে জোর দিয়েছে সে ব্যাপারে পাকিস্তানের প্রতিক্রিয়া জানা যায়নি। দু'পক্ষের মতবিরোধ কমানো সম্ভব হয়েছে কি না তা-ও জানা যায়নি।

তবে, দু'দেশের মাদক প্রতিরোধ দফতরের প্রধানদের বৈঠকে চোরাচালান সংক্রান্ত তথ্য আদানপ্রদান-সহ বিভিন্ন বিষয়ে মতৈক্য হয়েছে।

আফিম উৎপাদন ও রফতানি রুখতেও একটি যৌথ ব্যবস্থাও ভাবা হচ্ছে।

কাল রাতে স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিব ধীরেন্দ্র সিংহের নেতৃত্বে আট সদস্যের প্রতিনিধি দল ইসলামাবাদে পৌঁছায়। সিংহ বলেন, সন্ত্রাসবাদ ও মাদক চোরাচালান রুখতে কী ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া যায় সে বিষয়ে কথা হবে। ভারতীয় অফিসাররা জানান, মূলত তিনটি বিষয় প্রাধান্য পাবে। ১৯৯৯ সালে ইন্ডিয়ান এয়ারলাইন্সের আই সি-৮১৪ বিমান ছিনতাই ও ১৯৯৩ সালে মুম্বই বিস্ফোরণে অভিযুক্তদের ভারতের হাতে প্রত্যর্পণ করার বিষয়টিতে জোর দেওয়া হবে। মুম্বই বিস্ফোরণে প্রধান অভিযুক্ত দাউদ ইব্রাহিম বহু দিন ধরে পাকিস্তানে রয়েছেন বলে ভারতের দাবি। লস্কর-ই-তৈবা ও জয়েশ-ই-মহম্মদ প্রভৃতি মৌলবাদী সংগঠন পাকিস্তানে বিভিন্ন রকম সহায়তা পাচ্ছে বলেও অভিযোগ তুলবে ভারত। পাকিস্তানের তরফে বিদেশমন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র মাসুদ খান বলেন, আলোচনার

মাধ্যমগুলি ধর করে নতুন ধরণের সমাধানসূত্র খোঁজার চেষ্টা করবে দু'দেশ। সন্ত্রাসবাদ রুখতে পাকিস্তান রীতিমতো সচেষ্ট বলে দাবি করে মাসুদ বলেন, এ বিষয়ে ভারতের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি জানতে চাওয়া হবে।

কাল থেকে ভারত-পাক বাণিজ্য বৈঠক। ভারতের বাণিজ্যসচিব দীপক চট্টোপাধ্যায় দু'দিনের এই আলোচনায় যোগ দিতে কাল লাহোরে পৌঁছেছেন। দু'দেশের বাণিজ্য সম্পর্কের উন্নতি হলে ভারতের পণ্য পাকিস্তানের বাজার ছেয়ে ফেলবে এই ভয় খারিজ করে বাণিজ্যসচিব জানান, শ্রীলঙ্কার সঙ্গে মুক্ত বাণিজ্য চুক্তির পরে সে দেশ রফতানির পরিমাণ তিন গুণ বেড়ে গিয়েছে। ভারত পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে সরাসরি বাণিজ্যের পরিমাণ ৫০ কোটি টাকা। কিন্তু আঞ্চলিক মঞ্চের তৃতীয় দেশের মধ্যস্থতায় প্রায় ২০০ কোটি টাকার বাণিজ্য হয়। এই বাণিজ্যের সুফল পেতে বাণিজ্য সম্পর্ক উন্নত করা প্রয়োজন বলে মনে করে ভারত।

Delhi 'doubletalk' puzzles Pervez

Agencies
Islamabad, August 10

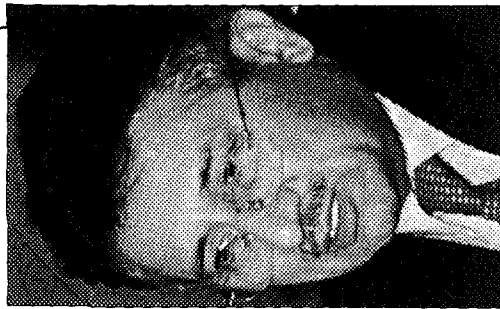
SUGGESTING THAT India is giving out contradictory signals on resolving the Kashmir issue, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf said the matter has left him "confused". "On the one side I am hopeful, while on the other Indians are giving negative signals. I am confused," he said in an interview to *The News*.

During talks, he said, Indians looked serious to solving the Kashmir problem, but in public "they do not speak with the same mind". "I told (India's External Affairs Minister) Natwar (Singh) about it when he called on me. I have my doubts ... they are playing tricks. I think they are moulding their public opinion gradually. But then there is a new government in India and one should give it a chance."

Describing Kashmir as a "flashpoint", Musharraf said the people in India were for peace, and once the issue is solved, "the rest will fall in line".

'Feelers' from India:

Musharraf said India has sent "some feelers" to Pakistan on resolving the Kashmir problem, which he would discuss with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh when they meet in New York in Septem-



Pervez Musharraf

ber. He reiterated that Kashmir is the "core issue" in Indo-Pak relationship, and that once the dispute over the Himalayan region is resolved, the rest would follow. "God willing, if we find a solution on Kashmir with India, all *jehadi* organisations have to pack up," he said, referring to his government's crackdown on terrorism.

Talks with India on confidence-building measures and other issues are progressing, Musharraf said, adding that there was no reason to think that they had broken down because there was no progress on other issues, like Siachen and Sir Creek.

"The Sir Creek issue has an impact on our economic zone. There is no end of dialogue... talks are going on," he said about the dispute over demarcation of the maritime boundary in the salty marshland in the Rann of Kutch, rich in oil and gas deposits.

On Siachen, Musharraf claimed that it was India, "which is suffering the most and if they want to continue to sit there, let them sit there licking their wounds".

He said his government was following a two-pronged strategy to effectively deal with the menace of terrorism and extremism. First is a long-term strategy to address the root cause of terrorism "in a most effective and efficient manner". The second was a short-term strategy under which force is being used against the masterminds, planners and executors of terrorist acts.

"We have achieved an unprecedented 90 per cent success in unearthing elements involved in terrorist attacks on me, Prime Minister-in-waiting Shaukat Aziz and in other high-profile cases," he claimed.

"Our intelligence agencies have done a tremendous job. Even the Western media is showering praise on us," Musharraf quickly added that no nuclear scientist was involved in any terrorist act.



PTI
Christians and NGO workers from Pakistan, on a peace trip to India, meet Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit at the secretariat on Tuesday.

SIR CREEK DISPUTE

India, Pakistan for early resolution

By Sandeep Dikshit

NEW DELHI, AUG. 7. India and Pakistan today ended their first talks in six years on the Sir Creek border demarcation dispute with a joint statement that reiterated the need for an early resolution of the issue. The two sides agreed to continue the discussions at a future date.

The talks on Sir Creek began on Friday soon after a joint statement on Siachen demilitarisation talks was finalised. The threads were picked up today with both sides presenting their viewpoints. The Surveyor General of India, Prithvish Nag, led the Indian delegation while the Additional Secretary in the Pakistan Ministry of Defence, Ahsan ul Haq Chaudhry, led the other side.

Exchange of views

The joint statement said the talks were held in a "frank and friendly atmosphere." The two sides elaborated upon their respective positions and had a detailed and useful exchange of views on various issues involved.

Pakistan said the entire Sir Creek, with its eastern bank defined by a "green line" and represented on a 1914 map belongs to it. However, India says the green line is an indicative line and felt the boundary should be defined by the "mid-channel" of the Creek as shown on a map dated 1925. Senior sources in

the Defence Ministry said reports that this was the last chance for both sides to resolve the dispute on a bilateral basis were "misplaced."

Talks next week

Sir Creek is one of the eight subjects in the composite dialogue process resumed earlier this year. The next round of talks will be held next week between the Home Secretaries of the two countries on combating terrorism and suppressing trade in narcotics.

The ambiguity in maritime boundaries in the Sir Creek area has led to the detention of fishermen by the two sides, it has deterred exploration in the oil and gas rich area, and positioning of armed forces on alert. At the last talks, Pakistan had wanted India to agree to take the dispute to an international tribunal. Demarcation of the boundary would have another major consequence: it would help in defining the limits of the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) and the continental shelf.

Accepting Pakistan's premise on the "green line" would mean loss of about 250 square miles of EEZ for India. Pakistan rejects India's proposal for mid-channel demarcation because it claims that this notion is applicable to navigable channels whereas Sir Creek is not navigable. The two sides have discussed the issue six times over the last two decades.

'No re-think on withdrawal of special powers Act'

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, AUG. 7. The Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, said today that there was "no question of thinking or re-thinking" on the withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act from Manipur.

"We are watching the situation. We had detailed discussion with the [State] Ministers. I myself was present. We have already indicated that in order to assuage

the feelings of the people a court of enquiry is looking into the incident [the killing of a woman activist]," he told mediapersons at the Heavy Vehicles Factory, Avadi, here.

The Minister assured that whoever had committed a mistake would be "taken to task. Nobody will be spared."

He appealed to the people to maintain peace and order. "To paralyse everything is not right," he said.

Police open fire: Page 10.

India, Pakistan agree to continue talks on Siachen

● Sir Creek issue under discussion

By Sandeep Dikshit

NEW DELHI, AUG. 6. Talks between India and Pakistan on demilitarising the Siachen Glacier ended here today with military experts of the two sides discussing modalities for disengagement and redeployment of troops and resolving to hold further discussions on the issue. The two Defence Secretaries agreed to "continue their discussions with a view to resolving the Siachen issue in a peaceful manner," said a joint statement following the meeting, the first in six years on ending the 20-year-old conflict.

With the talks on resolving the Siachen conflict concluding in the afternoon, the two sides took up the issue of demarcating the boundary in Sir Creek which divides India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch area. These talks will continue tomorrow, official sources said.

Senior officials said, "it was a good meeting after a long time;" redeployment and disengagement remained the goals of both India and Pakistan. The military experts discussed their present positions and methodology of disengagement. "We are headed in the right direction."

The joint statement released simultaneously in Islamabad and New Delhi did not specifically mention any agreement on the withdrawal of the troops from the glacier where Indian troops are at an advantage as they occupy the heights but also face more difficulties in ferrying supplies. "When you come down to discussing the modalities of disengagement, that is a definite sign that discussions have progressed," said a senior official asked to react on a Pakistan TV statement that an in-principle agreement had been reached on pulling out

troops from the Siachen Glacier.

Ceasefire to continue

The statement further said, "the two Defence Secretaries agreed to continue their discussions with a view to resolving the Siachen issue in a peaceful manner." The officials said the sentence meant that the ceasefire between the two sides would continue even as the two sides will sit across the table "soon" to thrash out differences.

"Frank and candid discussions were held in a cordial and constructive atmosphere aimed at taking the process forward. Both sides assessed positively the ceasefire that has been in effect since November 25, 2003," added the statement.

The Defence Secretary, Ajai Vikram Singh, and his Pakistani counterpart, Hamid Nawaz Khan, led the two-day Defence

Secretary level talks in the framework of the composite dialogue. The talks on the Sir Creek demarcation dispute are being led on the Indian side by the Ministry of Defence Additional Secretary, Ranjit Issar, and the delegation includes the Surveyor-General of India, P. Nag, and the Chief Hydrographer of the Indian Navy, B.R. Rao.

India's suspicion

The Siachen boundary is not demarcated. While drawing the boundary in 1949 and 1972, neither India nor Pakistan visualised that the icy wastes would become a battleground between the two sides. But India became suspicious of Pakistan's intentions after it began issuing trekking permits to mountaineers and flew in troops to occupy vantage positions on the Saloro ridge of the glacier.

Talks on Siachen begin

By Sandeep Dikshit

NEW DELHI, AUG. 5. India and Pakistan held exploratory discussions on demilitarising the

Siachen Glacier today and deliberated on the contours of a joint statement that is likely to be released tomorrow.

Senior officials termed the

meetings today as a "mind and body language study mission" by Pakistan following the change in the Government here and felt that "nothing substantial" was likely to emerge from the talks.

They said the officials from both sides made it a point to refer to the ceasefire since November 25 last year.

The two sides, assisted by naval officials, are scheduled to hold talks over the weekend on the Sir Creek demarcation dispute in the Rann of Kutch.

The interaction opened with a meeting between the two Defence Secretaries, Ajay Vikram Singh and Hamid Nawaz Khan.

The Pakistani team called on the National Security Adviser, J. N. Dixit, and along with the Indian delegation met the Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, to formally apprise him of the discussions.

Manmohan's birthplace to be model village

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 5. Pakistan tonight announced that the birthplace of the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, would be declared a "model village" as a gesture of goodwill to strengthen the India-Pakistan peace process.

"Prime Minister Ch. Shujaat Hussain has directed the Punjab Government to declare village Gah in District Chakwal — birthplace of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh — as a model

village and the Government Boys Primary School at Gah as the 'Manmohan Singh Government Boys Primary School,' as a gesture of goodwill to strengthen the peace process between Pakistan and India," an official statement said here. Dr. Singh's family migrated to the Indian side of Punjab before Partition. When he became the Prime Minister in May, there were celebrations in the Pakistani village where he was born and attended the primary school.

THE HINDU

6 AUG 2004

Defence secretaries set
for first meet in 6 years

Siachen
test for Pak
bonhomie

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Aug. 4: The two-day talks between India and Pakistan to promote friendly exchanges ended today on a cordial note with both sides agreeing to consider proposals that will intensify contacts between their people, including a liberal visa regime.

All eyes are now on the talks that begin tomorrow on Siachen glacier, the control over which costs the South Asian neighbours millions of dollars each day.

A ceasefire on the glacier, the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) and the Line of Control has been on since November last year.

Attempts will be made to come up with proposals that ensure the ceasefire holds for a longer period. Pakistan may even push for a mechanism that will lead to phased withdrawal of troops, if not a total pullout.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh chaired a 90-minute meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security this morning that was also attended by defence minister Pranab Mukherjee, foreign minister K. Natwar Singh and national security adviser J.N. Dixit. They were briefed by the director-general of military operations, Lt Gen. A.S. Bhaiya, on troop deployment on the 72-km glacier.

Army chief General N.C. Vij, who was also present, is likely to visit Jammu and Kashmir, particularly the glacier region, tomorrow. The defence minister will head to the glacier next week.

Pakistan's defence secretary, Lt Gen. (retd) Hamid Nawaz Khan, arrived with his team

this evening for the talks with Indian counterpart Ajai Vikram Singh.

The discussions will conclude on Friday. Defence secretary-level talks are being held for the first time in six years.

A joint statement was issued after the talks today with both countries agreeing to address humanitarian issues particularly those concerning civilian prisoners and fishermen in custody.

Stress has been laid on increasing the number of cross border pilgrims from 3,000 to 5,000 every year. Proposals have also been made to start issuing group tourist visas.

"The discussions were held in a very cordial and constructive atmosphere," foreign ministry spokesperson Navtej Sarna said. The two sides will try and come to an agreement on how the proposals can be implemented.

But the bonhomie will be tested when the defence secretaries begin talks on the Siachen Glacier.

Meetings in Delhi this week and in Islamabad next week are part of the composite dialogue. The progress made will play an important role in improving relations and indicate how long the peace process will stay on track.

Though the dispute is over the glacier, the armed engagement has been limited to the Soltoro range. Pakistan is at a disadvantage as its army posts are much lower than the Indian ones. Twice in the past, in 1989 and 1992, an agreement on Siachen appeared close but fizzled out at the last minute. India refused to agree to a troop pullout without demarcating the AGPL.

Pak refusal to exchange maps marking present ground positions

For a land named after the mountain rose, Siachen is something of a misnomer. For life is anything but rosy in the world's highest battlefield — where gunfire is exchanged at up to 20,000 feet above sea level. But the dispute has been described as one of the most futile and wasteful conflicts in the world, for nine out of 10 deaths here are due to climate.

Now, for the first time in six years, the Siachen dispute will figure in talks between the defence secretaries of India and Pakistan in New Delhi this week. This will be the eighth round of discussions, the last being in 1998.

Twice, the two sides came close to settling the dispute. But as a former commanding general of the Siachen and Kargil sectors, Lt General (Retd) V.R. Raghavan writes in *Siachen — Conflict Without End*, the two sides have "found the political cost of ending the conflict more daunting than the prospect of living with it".

The solutions proposed include demilitarisation of the glacier and of creating a "Zone of Disengagement". However, mutual lack of trust has prevented a resolution. It is doubtful whether the talks would break new ground.

Brand Siachen

Siachen evokes strong passions in both India and Pakistan. It was for the brand rub-off of Siachen that former defence minister George Fernandes visited the Glacier so often.

Pakistan's President General Pervez Musharraf's "Siachen consciousness" is also very high. In September 1987, as brigade commander of the Special Services Group, he was responsible for leading an attack on an Indian position at Bilafond La, one of the two main passes on the Salto ridge, to the Siachen Glacier from Pak occupied Kashmir (PoK). His forces had to retreat. Having also served as Pakistan's Force Commander, Northern Areas, he knows the Siachen dispute intimately.

Although the boundary dispute between India and Pakistan in this region is referred to as the Siachen dispute, the Siachen Glacier is in fact in India's control. There is no battle raging on the Glacier itself. Indian soldiers sit on the Salto ridge to the west of Siachen. Between the Pakistani forces and the Glacier, there are high mountain peaks controlled by India. The Siachen Glacier flows in the valley formed by the Salto ridge to its west and the Eastern Karakoram. It is about 72 km long from its highest point at Indra Col to its snout.

The Iceland

Militarily, the Siachen Glacier can be divided into three parts. The Northern Glacier is the most formidable, containing the highest peaks. The Central part is where the Glacier is broadest — up to 20 km wide and this is where India has its Kumar Post from where expeditions are launched to the various Salto peaks. The Southern Glacier is just four to five km wide. Helicopters maintain the Northern and Central Glacier while ponies and porters supply the Southern Glacier.

Arms and the Men

The Indian Army has taken 105 mm field guns to the Glacier to support the peaks. They are deployed at the lower end of the Northern Glacier and in the Southern Glacier. The Base Camp has 130 mm and the Bofors 155 mm guns.

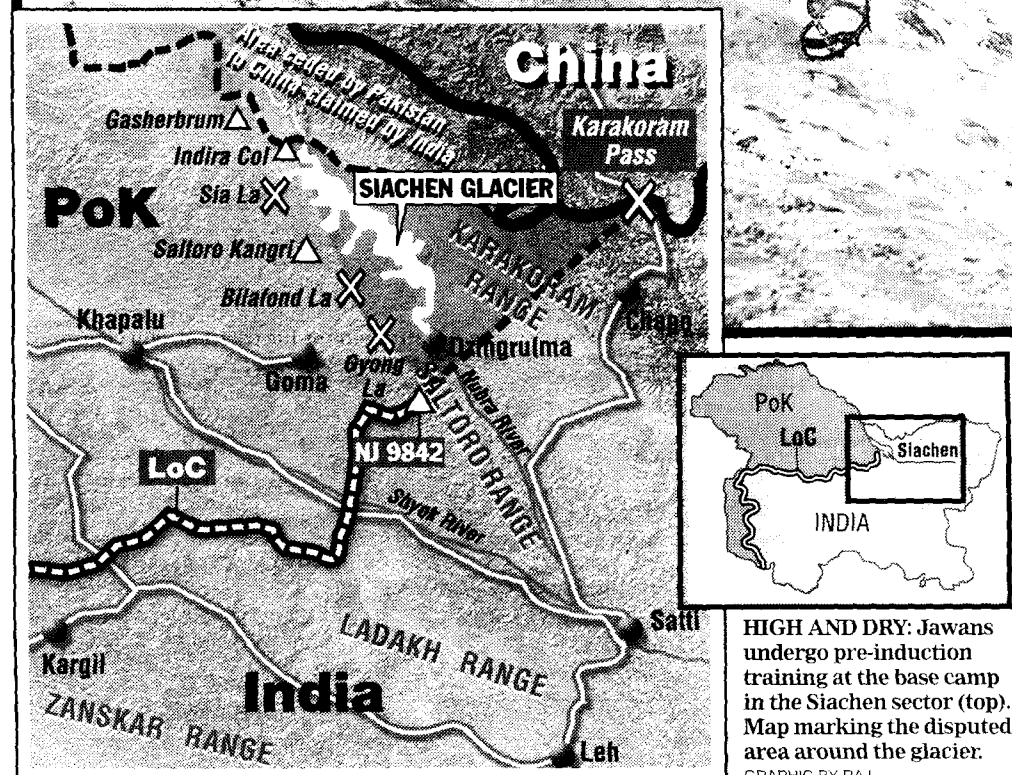
The difficulty in using field guns on the Glacier arises from the shifting ice — moving by about two inches a day in winters and 10 to 20 feet a day in summer. Registering a target and using the calculations to shoot after even a couple of days will not guarantee a hit because of shifting gun positions.

At any point of time three battalions are deployed, three are in training and three awaiting orders. The soldiers manning the observation posts on the Salto and the camps have to be relieved every 30 days to three months.

The Costs of War

The estimates of the costs of hostilities on Siachen vary. "No

BREAKING THE ICE



HIGH AND DRY: Jawans undergo pre-induction training at the base camp in the Siachen sector (top). Map marking the disputed area around the glacier. GRAPHIC BY RAJ

India and Pakistan have had seven futile rounds of talks on the Siachen dispute. Will the eighth, later this week, fare any better? BHARAT BHUSHAN reports

one has an accurate assessment, but everyone has a figure to quote and a point to make," says General Raghavan. Without endorsing any estimate, he quotes cost figures ranging from US \$1.2 million per day for both India and Pakistan; \$1.94 million a day for India alone; and Rs 2.5 crore to Rs 6.5 crore for India alone to \$18.5 million a day for Pakistan and 30 times that for India. Pakistan's former foreign secretary Shaharyar Khan once said that the cost of a 'rote' for a Pakistani soldier posted in that region is more than Rs 450. Fernandes told Parliament that Siachen costs the exchequer Rs 3 crore per day.

The Starting Point

The Siachen dispute originated because the boundary in Jammu and Kashmir after the Karachi Agreement of 1949 was not fully demarcated. A cease-fire line (CFL) on the map ended at a grid point with co-ordinates NJ9842 on the Salto ridge.

This was near the northernmost point where troops were deployed when the fighting ended in 1948. Although the CFL subsequently changed into the Line of Control (LoC) after the Shimla Agreement of 1972, its end points remained the same.

The descriptive explanation of the boundary beyond NJ9842 — "thence North to the Glaciers" — has created some confusion. India believes that this means that the boundary would go north through the nearest watershed, the Salto ridge. Pakistan draws a straight line from NJ9842 going north-east to the Karakoram pass. The for-

mer interpretation gives the control of the Glacier to India, the latter, to Pakistan.

The Conflict

In 1978, the Indian army became aware of maps showing the LoC as a straight line extended from NJ9842 to the Karakoram pass appearing in publications abroad. The same year an Indian Army mountaineering expedition led by Colonel N. Kumar brought back evidence of foreign mountaineering expeditions being launched into the Siachen area from PoK. Both sides were convinced that the other was trying to establish a military presence in the area. It was then that India realised that Pakistan was behind the extension of NJ9842 to the Karakoram pass, claiming the Siachen glacier.

India Steps In

India objected to this "cartographic aggression". The choice before the Indian Army was to either turn a blind eye or pre-empt Pakistan. In late 1983, India learnt that Pakistan was purchasing high altitude gear and its troops were planning to occupy the passes leading to the Siachen Glacier.

Two months before the mountaineering season was to begin in April 1984, India airlifted two platoons of Kumaon Regiment and placed them on the two key passes of Bilafond La and Sia La on the Salto ridge.

Enter the Dragon

Both India and Pakistan see geo-political compulsions in

fighting for Siachen. In 1963, Pakistan ceded 4,500 sq km of Kashmir, the Shaksgam Valley to the west of the Karakoram, to China because it wanted a border with China.

India did not recognise this settlement. However, New Delhi came to know of the Chinese activities in the area only a decade after China had built the Aksai Chin highway passing through it. The belated Indian presence on the Salto ridge abutting the Shaksgam Valley seeks to question the Sino-Pakistan 'border settlement'.

Nothing to Fight For

Initially the Siachen conflict was also justified in terms of countering a threat to Ladakh from Pakistani forces coming down the Nubra Valley via Siachen. This is now considered logistically unviable. There are many, however, who argue that the Glacier has no strategic significance and its militarisation is the result of competing and irrational nationalism. That Siachen rankles in the Pakistani mind is evident from the fact that the Kargil misadventure, some in Pakistan claim, was aimed at undoing the Indian takeover of Siachen. One of its objectives was to snatch Siachen from India by cutting off the Srinagar-Leh route.

India Proposes

India and Pakistan have held seven rounds of talks on Siachen. They apparently came close to resolving the dispute in 1989 and again in 1992. These attempts were unsuccessful be-

cause of two reasons. Pakistan wants India to withdraw to pre-Shimla positions by vacating the Salto ridge but wants to retain its own military positions claiming that they are pre-1971 ones. Second, to keep up the myth of engaging India on the Siachen Glacier, it refuses to exchange maps marking the present ground positions. These would show that Pakistan is nowhere near the Siachen Glacier and that its posts on the Salto are at much lower heights (9,000 to 15,000 feet) than Indian ones.

Was there really a settlement in the offing in 1989? American scholar Robert Wirsig has claimed that India made six proposals to Pakistan in 1989: cessation of cartographic aggression by Pakistan (extending the LoC from NJ 9842 north-east to the Karakoram pass); establishing a demilitarised zone at Siachen; exchange of maps to show present positions; delimitation of the border beyond NJ9842 towards the China border based on ground realities; formulation of ground rules for future military stand-off — a measure of last resort; and redeployment of Indian and Pakistani forces to mutually agreed positions.

Pakistan Deposits

Pakistan apparently countered this with two alternative proposals: deployment of Indian and Pak forces to agreed positions held at the time of 1971 cease-fire (pre-Shimla positions); and only then, the delimitation of an extension of the LoC beyond NJ9842. There were differences over which should come first — delimitation or redeployment. Redevelopment was seen as entirely an Indian withdrawal with Pakistan staying put. India was unwilling to accept only an Indian pullout.

Momentary Hope

In the sixth round of talks in 1992 India claimed that there

was an understanding on the redeployment of Indian and Pakistani troops and on creating a "Zone of Disengagement" on either side of the Salto ridge-line. But Pakistan was again unwilling to mark its current deployment on a map, indicating the ground reality before disengagement. The hopes of Indian officials for a settlement were dashed when they approached the political leadership. The Zone of Disengagement Plan did not find political acceptance with Narasimha Rao's minority government.

Changes in the Offing

In the round of talks in November 1998, India referred only to the Salto ridge with no mention of the Siachen Glacier. The proposal for a Zone of Disengagement was also dropped.

The 1998 proposals instead suggested a comprehensive cease-fire along the Salto region based on a freeze on present ground positions; discussions of the modalities of cease-fire in a time-frame; bilateral mechanisms for the cease-fire; and authenticating the existing position on the Salto range beyond NJ9842. Pakistan rejected the proposals. The Indian position had hardened in the face of Pakistani obduracy.

The army has the dominant say in the Siachen dispute. Its position is that there should be no asymmetrical redeployment of troops. To climb up the Salto peaks the Pakistani army does not have to traverse a glacier. If there is a pullback by the Indian Army to say, Leh or Turtuk but the Pakistani stay in Skardu, they can occupy the key positions on the Salto ridge in 10 days' time. It would take India nearly four months to do that.

There is little to indicate there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Many believe that the political leaderships both in Pakistan and in India are far too weak today to sell a Siachen solution to their people.