

India proposes meeting points for split families

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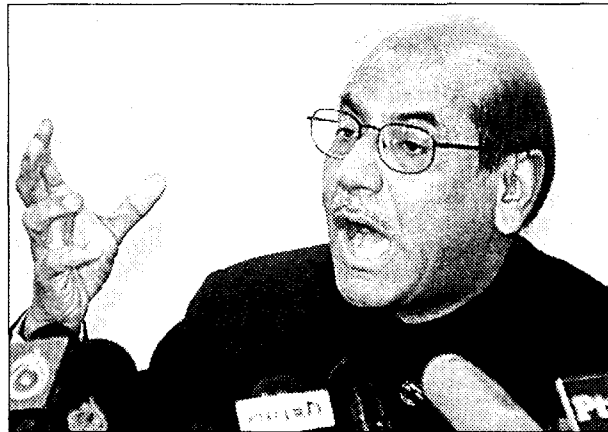
Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 28 DECEMBER

TAKING forward the objective to bridge the distance between people of the two countries, India has proposed to Pakistan five designated places along the border to enable divided families to meet.

Pakistan has said it will look into the proposal that was made in the two-day talks at the for-

schedule will also include meetings on expert-level dialogue on nuclear and conventional CBMs, technical-level meetings on bus service between and through Amritsar and Lahore and between the narcotics control authorities.

The next foreign secretaries meet would be held in July-August 2005 in New Delhi to review the overall progress in the dialogue process.



FAMILY TIES: Foreign secretary Shyam Saran gestures while addressing a press conference in Islamabad on Tuesday. — AFP

Foreign secretaries level that concluded in Islamabad on Tuesday. The five places proposed on the LoC as well as international border are Mendhar, Poonch, Suchetgarh, Uri and Tangdhar.

The suggestion, in which the meetings can take place at a pre-decided time and under joint security, appears to be a way out of the impasse that has been created in talks on starting a Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service. Addressing a news conference in Islamabad, foreign secretary Shyam Saran said: "This will be a big step towards promoting contacts between divided families and people of Kashmir on both sides." The focus is more on measures to make life easier for people on both sides of LoC, he said, adding "we are adopting people-centric" policies to address the Kashmir issue.

A joint statement issued also said that schedules for technical meetings on a number of issues that form part of the composite dialogue process had been agreed upon. Meetings of the joint study group on trade matters headed by the commerce secretaries, Indian Coast Guards and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency, Pakistan Rangers and BSF will be held between January and June next year. The time

India, Pak differ on gas pipeline plan

Islamabad
28 DECEMBER

INDIA and Pakistan have differed over the modalities in reaching an agreement on the trans-national Iran-India gas pipeline after Islamabad said it was a "stand-alone" project and that it would not accept any "external conditionalities" on it.

After assertions by Pakistan on Monday that it is a "stand-alone" project and that it will not accept any "external conditionalities", India said Pakistan should accept the \$4 billion gas pipeline, also known as "peace pipeline," as part of overall opening of trade and economic development between the two countries.

Indian officials asked if Pakistan agreed it was a win-win proposal, why was it opposed to development of trade and economic relations of a similar nature. — PTI

29 DEC 2004

The Economic Times

India concerned over US arms supply to Pak

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 22 DECEMBER

INDIA has lodged a protest with the US over the latter's continued supply of sophisticated armaments to Pakistan, warning that it could adversely impact the dialogue between New Delhi and Islamabad. While replying to a discussion on foreign policy in the Rajya Sabha, external affairs minister Natwar Singh said the government had conveyed its "deep concern" over the US' reported arms supply to Pakistan.

This, Mr Singh warned, would not only erode the goodwill and friendly feeling that exists for the US in India but could also hit the very dialogue process (between India and Pakistan) that the US has so strongly advocated and supported.

India's reservations, the external affairs minister disclosed, were expressed at the highest level by his colleague, defence minister Pranab Mukherjee, and himself during US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld's recent visit here. Countering the NDA's charge that the UPA government was giving "contrary signals" on US supply of weapons to Pakistan, Mr Singh sought to point a finger at the erstwhile NDA government instead. He referred to the US promise of \$3-billion package to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf in June 2003, half of which was for buying arms, to complain that the then foreign minister Yashwant Singh had never bothered to rake up the issue in his subsequent interactions with the US leaders.

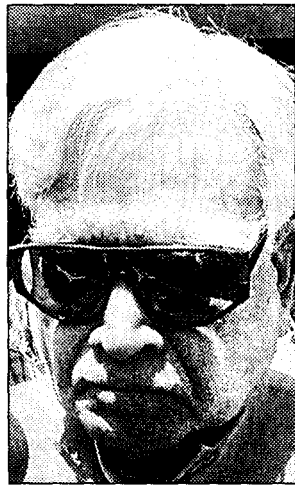
Perhaps, this only encouraged the US to confer 'major non-Nato ally' status on Pakistan on March 18, 2004, he said adding: "What we are seeing today is the implementation of decisions taken then."

"I do not know if the US could have been persuaded to change its policy on arms supply. But I do know that if there was a time for that, it was in 2003 and early 2004, rather than now."

Describing Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's September meeting with Gen Musharraf in New York as a "landmark" one, he said two important messages were conveyed — the importance of implementing the assur-

ance contained in January 6 joint statement that no territory under the control of Pakistan would be used for terror against India and that no solution to J&K issue could involve redrawing of boundaries or another partition of India on the basis of religion.

This was affirmed to Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz when he visited Delhi in late November this year, said the external affairs minister. Rejecting Opposition charge of drift in India's Pakistan policy, Mr Singh on Wednesday said the dialogue process was "on track" and mak-



NATWAR SINGH

ing "progress".

Foreign secretary Shyam Saran and his Pakistani counterpart Riaz Khokhar are slated to meet in Islamabad on December 27 and 28 where they will review progress in the composite dialogue and discuss issues related to peace and security as well as J&K in a "substantive manner," he said. Mr Singh said he planned to visit Pakistan in February.

Clarifying the government's position on Hurriyat, he said though the Centre was open to talks with all individuals and groups who shun violence, there was "no third party presence at the Indo-Pakistan talks nor is there any likelihood of this in the future".

On the proposed Munnabao-Khokrapar rail link, he said the Pakistan side has now indicated that it will need more time to complete the work on its side of the border. This is the simple explanation and there is no need to look for complexity.

India not to withdraw troops from Siachen

New Delhi
22 DECEMBER

INDIA has no plans to withdraw its troops from positions they hold on the Siachen glacier, defence minister Pranab Mukherjee informed Parliament on Wednesday. "There is no move to withdraw troops from the Siachen glacier," Mr Mukherjee said in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha.

India and Pakistan had discussed "modalities for disengagement and redeployment of troops" on Siachen, the world's highest and coldest battlefield, when the defence secretaries of the two countries met here in August.

"The two sides agreed to continue discussions," Mr Mukherjee said, and the talks were part of the composite dialogue between the two countries.

Indian troops, which have been engaged in a face-off with Pakistani forces on Siachen since 1984, currently hold commanding positions along the Saltoro ridge. New Delhi is reluctant to commit to any troop withdrawal from Siachen till both sides officially demarcate positions held by them on the glacier.

When the foreign ministers of India and Pakistan met in Delhi in September, the two sides had also agreed to implement the decisions taken at the talks between the defence secretaries, Mr Pranab Mukherjee said.

"The security situation is dynamic and reviewed periodically," he said. "No compromise will be made on security related matters and plans are in place to cater to all possible operational contingencies."

"A ceasefire between Indian and Pakistani forces along the frontiers in Jammu and Kashmir, including in Siachen, has been operational since November last year.

— IANS

23 DEC 2004

The Economic Times

Quadrilateral
foreign policy
4.12.04
2004

No redrawing of boundaries: Manmohan

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 21. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today informed Parliament that he had told the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, that "while we are willing to look at various options [for a negotiated settlement of the issue of Jammu and Kashmir], we will not agree to any redrawing of boundaries, or another partition of the country."

Making a statement in both Houses on foreign policy-related issues, Dr. Singh spelt out his Government's approach to foreign policy: "Our objective is to focus on the centrality of national interests in the conduct of our external relations and the pursuit of our economic interests. We have taken important initiatives, keeping in mind the imperative of retaining our freedom of options, remaining alive to our concerns."

The Prime Minister was giving a brief overview of his visits to London, New York, The Hague and Vientiane as well of his discussions with leaders from Russia, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Germany, and

Myanmar among others.

Dr. Singh said he had emphasised to the Prime Minister of Nepal, Sher Bahadur Deuba, that "our traditional policy of support for multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy are the twin pillars of the Nepalese Constitution." Similarly, he told Senior General Than Shwe of Myanmar that "while India did not wish to interfere in Myanmar's internal affairs, we would welcome [the] early realisation of the goal of multi-party democracy based on national reconciliation and an inclusive approach."

No ambiguity on U.N. Security Council seat

Later, replying to clarifications posed by the former External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, in the Rajya Sabha, the Prime Minister said there was no ambiguity or confusion over India's candidature for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. "Our fundamental position is clear. There should be no distinction in the Security Council between existing members and new members." At the

same time, he appealed to members not to prejudge the issue since it was not clear what the recommendations on U.N. reforms would be and what would be the eventual reforms package. India was in touch with all the countries over the matter.

Dr. Singh clarified that there was no ambiguity about India's nuclear policy either. "India is a nuclear weapon state and is a responsible nuclear power. That sums up our view. At the same time, we are a country with a civilisational heritage for complete nuclear disarmament. We will join hands with other countries to promote complete disarmament on a non-discriminatory basis globally."

On supply of nuclear fuel from Russia, he said Russia had undertaken to fulfil all contractual obligations. Discussions were under way on additional supplies and "a satisfactory solution will be found," he assured members.

Referring to the proposed sale of American arms to Pakistan, the Prime Minister said India's concerns were conveyed to the U.S. Secretary of Defence, Do-

nald Rumsfeld, when he visited the country earlier this month.

Dr. Singh did not share Mr. Sinha's view that the Government had diluted the emphasis on curbing cross-border terrorism from Pakistan. "We did lay emphasis on the centrality and criticality of Pakistan curbing terrorism. Other confidence-building measures will not work if the situation on the ground is out of control." He recalled his first news conference after the U.N. General Assembly where he had said the whole exercise to build ties with Pakistan could take off only if Pakistan remained committed to the January 6 agreement on curbing cross-border terrorism.

India had not finalised plans to import gas from Iran via Pakistan and said several options for receiving gas through pipelines were being explored, he said. New Delhi discussed the issue of anti-India insurgent groups based in Myanmar with Senior General Than Shwe and received a positive assurance from him. "The information available with me shows that Myanmar was honouring its commitment."

22 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

UPA draws flak for foreign policy slips

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 20 DECEMBER

NOTWITHSTANDING the attempts to brush them aside, a string of controversies on the foreign policy front have resulted in embarrassment for the UPA government. An impression has gained ground that its senior functionaries dealing with the subject have been working at cross purposes. The Opposition on Monday seized upon the latest contradiction — that came following reports of a high official from the Prime Minister's establishment voicing the government's inclination to opt for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council without a veto — to put the government on the mat in the Rajya Sabha.

The issue is of considerable dis-

as well as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, especially since the government, only last fortnight, had made it clear in the Lok Sabha that a permanent seat without veto powers was meaningless. The external affairs ministry had even sought to encash on the "clarification" that came from Russian president Vladimir Putin, where he emphasised that Moscow indeed was very much supportive of India getting equal status as the existing permanent members.

The discordant notes on the foreign affairs front, therefore, are being attributed to the absence of coordination between the ministry of external affairs (MEA) and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). It has been suggested that there has been a per-



SINGH: HOME AND THE WORLD

petual tug of war between the two on fine-tuning of foreign policy ever since the UPA came to power. There have been intermittent reports about Natwar Singh resisting interference in his ministry. In an earlier instance, it

was said that the Prime Minister himself was kept in the dark on details about the specific framework on J&K agreed upon between India and Pakistan in which the external affairs minister invoked the UN charter and the Shimla agreement.

On the other hand, the PM's establishment too has had its own perceptions on the functioning of the external affairs ministry. Natwar Singh's common nuclear doctrine for India, Pakistan and China, which he proposed in his first press conference, had evoked sneers from some in the PMO. On Sunday, the foreign office stressed that the media had got it all wrong in assuming that a meeting between the Prime Minister and the external affairs minister on last Saturday was about clarifying his

controversial remarks on India's nuclear status made in Korea during his Seoul visit.

The Opposition has only sought to capitalise on these differences. In the debate in the Rajya Sabha, it took the government to task by raising questions on the direction that foreign policy was heading towards. Charging it with making a number of faux pas in foreign policy affairs, BJP leader and former external affairs minister Yashwant Sinha demanded that the government clear the air immediately over the contradictory statements.

Leading the Opposition attack, he accused the Congress-led regime of surrendering before the US by agreeing to end use verification on dual use technology and not doing enough to stop sale of arms to Pakistan.

Trade policy to focus on agriculture

NEW DELHI, Dec 20. — Agriculture will one of the major focus areas of the new foreign trade policy (FTP) 2004-09, that is under implementation, commerce and industry minister, Mr Kamal Nath, today informed the Rajya Sabha.

Listing out some of the benefits announced in the new FTP under the special package on agriculture, the minister said a new scheme, Vishesh Krishi Upaj Yojana (special agricultural produce scheme) to promote export of fruits, vegetables, flowers, minor forest produce and their value added products had been introduced.

Funds would be earmarked under the Assistance to States for Infrastructural Development for Exports (ASIDE) for development of agri-export zones (AEZs). Import of capital goods would be permitted duty-free under the export promotion credit guarantee (EPCG) scheme. Capital goods imported under EPCG would be permitted to be installed anywhere in the AEZs.

Import of restricted items, such as panels, would be allowed under the various export promotion schemes. Import of inputs such as pesticides, would be permitted under the advance licence for agro exports and new towns of export excellence with a threshold limit of Rs 250 crore would be notified, the minister elaborated. — SNS

21 DE 2004

THE STATESMAN

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21/12

Foreign policy unclear, says Yashwant Sinha

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 20. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) today accused the Government of having an unclear foreign policy and demanded that it clarify whether it was prepared to accept the membership of the United Nations Security Council with or without the veto.

Speaking during a short duration discussion on foreign policy in the Rajya Sabha, the former Minister for External Affairs, Yashwant Sinha, quoted a report in *The Hindu* to ask how the visiting chief of Russia's nuclear establishment could make a statement about not supplying fuel to Indian nuclear plants, despite the fact that both countries enjoyed an all-weather relationship.

Surrendering to U.S.

Mr. Sinha alleged that the Government had yielded to the

U.S. by agreeing to end-use verification on dual-use technology and by not doing enough to stop sale of arms to Pakistan.

"When we were in power, the Congress and the Left were lampooning us for surrendering to the U.S. But if reports that India has agreed to end-use verifications are correct, it is a matter of grave concern and amounts to surrendering before the U.S." Mr. Sinha said the Government was not paying enough attention to the January 6 agreement with Pakistan for ending cross-border terrorism.

"Where is the foreign policy of this country heading? In seven months, it is a shambles. There are contradictory statements. The Defence Minister, the Home Minister, the External Affairs Minister and the Prime Minister's Office are all speaking in different voices,"

he said, before referring to another report in *The Hindu* to prove his point.

'Well-reshaped'

On the other hand, the Congressman, Karan Singh, said the foreign policy of the Government had been well-reshaped in tune with the changing times and welcomed the ongoing talks with Pakistan on a number of confidence-building measures.

Nilotpal Basu of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) pointed to the growing ties with Israel and said this would jeopardise India's long-standing ties with West Asian countries. He said India should represent the concerns of the developing countries and mould its attitude accordingly, instead of behaving like a superpower. Mr. Basu said he favoured a nuanced and balanced approach towards foreign policy.

21 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

Natwar meets PM

India Foreign PM STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE SF 90 19/12

NEW DELHI, Dec. 18. — The external affairs minister, Mr K Natwar Singh met the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today in the backdrop of the controversy created over his remarks in South Korea on India's nuclear policy.

According to sources, the minister's discussions with the Prime Minister was related to the visit of Malaysian Prime Minister, Mr Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who will arrive here tomorrow on a five-day state visit. Returning from a three-day visit to Seoul, the external affairs minister drove straight to the PM's residence and held a half-hour meeting.

Taking strong exception to Mr Natwar Singh's remarks in an interview to *Korea Times* on India crossing the nuclear threshold during the NDA regime, the BJP had demanded a statement from the Prime Minister in Parliament. Dr Singh said in Rajya Sabha on Thursday that India was a responsible nuclear power and that his assessment of Mr Natwar Singh's reported remarks appeared to be in context to questions from journalists and were not a policy statement.

Meanwhile, the BJP today criticised the reported remarks made by Mr Natwar Singh on India's nuclear policy, saying that the controversy "exposed another serious infirmity" of the UPA government.

19 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

নটবরের মন্তব্য, লালু-পাসোয়ান দ্বন্দ্ব, ঠেলা সামলাচ্ছেন মনমোহন

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৬ ডিসেম্বর: তাঁর মন্ত্রিসভার একের পর এক সদস্যকে নিয়ে জেরবার হচ্ছেন স্বয়ং প্রধানমন্ত্রী। দক্ষিণ কোরিয়ায় গিয়ে ভারতের পরমাণু নীতি নিয়ে বিতর্কিত মন্তব্য করে এসেছেন বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ। এবং শেষ পর্যন্ত ঠেলা সামলাতে আসরে নামতে হয়েছে মনমোহন সিংহকে। মন্ত্রিসভার আরও দুই সতীর্থ লালুপ্রসাদ যাদব ও রামবিলাস পাসোয়ানের 'প্রকাশ্য বিবাদ' সামাল দিতেও আজ রাজ্যসভায় বিবৃতি দিতে হয়েছে মনমোহনকে।

মন্ত্রিদ্ব পায়ের পরে বেফাঁস মন্তব্য করে সরকার এবং দলকে বিপাকে ফেলার নজির নটবর আগেও রেখেছেন। দল সতর্ক করে দিয়েছে এবং তার পরে দীর্ঘদিন তিনি সাংবাদিক সম্মেলন বা প্রকাশ্য অনুষ্ঠান, নটবর কথা বলেছেন পরিমিতি রেখে। কিন্তু তাঁর কালকের মন্তব্যে আজ ঝড় ওঠে সংসদে। সোলে গিয়ে বিদেশমন্ত্রী যা বলেছেন, তার সারমর্ম হল, ১৯৯৮ সালে পরমাণু বিস্ফোরণের ফলে ভারতের সম্মানহানি হয়েছে। তৎকালীন এন ডি এ সরকারই ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে পরমাণু অস্ত্র প্রতিযোগিতা শুরু করার জন্য দায়ী। বিরোধী শিবিরের অভিযোগ, এ কথা বলে বিদেশমন্ত্রী তাঁর সরকারের পরমাণু নীতিরই (ন্যূনতম বিশ্বাসযোগ্য পারমাণবিক প্রতিরোধ

বিরোধিতা করছেন। প্রসঙ্গত, ১৯৭৪ সালে ইন্দিরা গান্ধীর সময় থেকেই পরমাণু পরীক্ষার ব্যাপারে সবুজ সঙ্কেত দিয়ে এসেছে কংগ্রেস সরকার।

আজ জিরো আওয়ারে বিষয়টি তুলে রাজ্যসভায় বিরোধী নেতা যশোবন্ত সিংহ বলেন, "বিদেশমন্ত্রীর মন্তব্যে দেশের গৌরবকে ধুয়ে ফেলা হয়েছে।" প্রধানমন্ত্রী জবাবে বলেন, "আমার ধারণা, বিদেশমন্ত্রী সাংবাদিকদের প্রশ্নের উত্তরে এ কথা বলেছেন। এই মন্তব্য আমাদের বিদেশনীতি বিষয়ক বিবৃতি নয়। স্পষ্ট জানিয়ে দিতে চাই, আমাদের পরমাণু-নীতি নিয়ে কোনও অনিশ্চয়তা নেই।... ভারত পরমাণুশক্তিধর দেশ এবং যথেষ্ট দায়িত্বপূর্ণ ভাবে সেই শক্তির ব্যবহার করতে সক্ষম।"

মনমোহন বলেন, ভারতের বিদেশনীতি এবং প্রতিরক্ষা কৌশল জাতীয় ঐকমত্যের উপরেই নির্ধারিত হবে। এর মধ্যে কোনও দলগত রাজনীতি থাকতে পারে না। নটবর আগামী কাল সোল থেকে ফিরলে এই বিতর্কের স্পষ্ট ছবি পাওয়া যাবে বলেও জানিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী।

এর আগে ইরাকে সেনা পাঠানোর প্রশ্নে যখন বিতর্ক চরমে, তখন আমেরিকায় নটবর বলেন, "আমরা গোটা পরিস্থিতিই হিসাবে রাখছি।" এই মন্তব্যে শোরগোল ফেলে দেন বামেরা। তড়িঘড়ি দল ও সরকারকে জবাবদিহি

করতে হয় যে, মন্তব্যের ভুল ব্যাখ্যা হচ্ছে। ভারত ইরাকে সেনা পাঠানোর পক্ষে নয়। নটবরের কালকের বিবৃতির পরে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গেই পরিস্থিতি নিয়ন্ত্রণে সক্রিয় হয়েছে বিদেশ মন্ত্রক। আজ বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র নভতেজ সারনা বলেন, নটবর '৯৮ সালের পরমাণু বিস্ফোরণ নিয়ে এন ডি এ সরকারের সিদ্ধান্ত সমর্থনও করেননি, বিরোধিতাও করেননি। সারনার কথায়, "তিনি ঘটনার বিবরণ দিয়েছেন মাত্র।"

নটবর ছাড়া মনমোহনের গলার কাঁটা হয়ে উঠেছেন লালু ও রামবিলাস। প্রধানমন্ত্রী আগেই তাঁদের ডেকে সতর্ক করে দিয়েছেন। এর পরে অবশ্য দু'জনেই সংসদে আলাদা করে বিবৃতি দেন যে, তাঁরা কেউ কারও বিরুদ্ধে মন্তব্য করেননি। তাতে অবশ্য শাস্ত হয়নি বিরোধী পক্ষ। পঞ্জাবের রেল দুর্ঘটনা এবং কাল সংসদ থেকে লালুর অর্ন্তধানে সমালোচনা চরমে ওঠে। বহু দিন পরে আসরে নেমে বাজপেয়ী আক্রমণ শানান। আডবাণী আগেই বলেছিলেন, মন্ত্রিসভার সামগ্রিক দায়িত্ব নিতে হবে মনমোহনকেই। আজ মনমোহন রাজ্যসভায় বলেছেন, "লালুপ্রসাদ এবং রামবিলাস, দু'জনেই আলাদা করে সংসদে বিবৃতি দিয়েছেন। তাঁরা জানিয়েছেন যে, পারস্পরিক দোষারোপ করেননি। ব্যাপারটি এর পরেই মিটিয়ে ফেলা উচিত। আর কোনও জবাবদিহির প্রয়োজন নেই।"

17 DEC 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Diplomatic Ties With Neighbours Get Priority

Natwar happy with new focus of foreign policy

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 8 DECEMBER

A re-focusing of the country's foreign policy, by giving high priority to the immediate neighbourhood and consolidating diplomatic ties with other nations, had led to significant gains, external affairs minister K. Natwar Singh said on Wednesday.

Replying to a debate on the issue in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, Mr Singh maintained that though the government was pursuing a strategic partnership model with the US, it had not given any commitment on the missile defence project. He also reaffirmed the government's efforts to gain permanent membership of the UN Security Council with veto powers, while reassuring the House that even election personnel would not be sent to Iraq.

Outlining the policy in the sub-continent, Mr Singh revealed it was the focused approach which gave tangible results on countering insurgents in the North East following the visit of the Myanmar head of the state, senior general Than Shwe to New Delhi last month. "This has resulted in important cross-border projects



being taken up and coordinated action to deal with insurgency and extremist activities in our border areas," he told members in the lower House.

Mr Singh said India's relationship with China had intensified in the last six months, reflected by the visits of two senior Chinese state councillors and several other high-level interactions including the summit meeting between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao during the Asean meet in Laos last month. He added that two rounds of talks had already been held be-

tween the special representatives of the two countries on the boundary question since his government assumed office.

On bettering its relationship with Pakistan, Mr Singh said India had put behind a "reactive policy which frequently oscillated between euphoria and despair" and had opted for the approach of a "sustained and comprehensive dialogue process". Observing that the atmosphere between India and Pakistan had shown "considerable improvement", he said from time to time though, statements from Pakistan had sounded a "discordant note". He added, however, that New Delhi would not be deflected by "transient developments and often contradictory pronouncements from the other side of the border".

Emphasising that there were "no quick fixes" or "magic" solutions to "complicated" issues, the minister said he would not like to present a picture that everything was well. "It is not," he said. He said the government hoped to resolve "some hitches" on the proposed bus link between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, on which the two-day technical talks ended inconclusively on Wednesday.

09 DEC 2004

The Economic Times

Poll panel can train Iraqis in India: Natwar

Indo-Pakistani forum

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 8. The External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, today categorically stated that the Government had no intention to send anybody from the Election Commission to help in the conduct of polls there. Mr. Singh told the Lok Sabha that New Delhi was prepared to train Iraqi personnel in India. "The Iraqis can send their people for training; we will not send anybody to Iraq," he said.

Mr. Singh focussed on a host of issues in the course of a lengthy reply to a discussion in Parliament. Referring to Pakistan, Mr. Singh expressed the hope that the future of India-Pakistan relations did not lie in the past. He conceded that all was not well in the bilateral relations. "I do not wish to give a picture saying that all is well. It is not. There are complicated issues going back many decades; there are no quick fixes and there are no magic solutions available. But we are emphasising the aspects which are positive and trying to solve all aspects which are negative," he said.

Praise for Vajpayee

In a rare display of bipartisan support, the External Affairs Minister gave credit to the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, for engaging Pakistan

in a sustained and comprehensive dialogue process. "I must record that this process started on January 6, when both Mr. Vajpayee and General Musharraf announced that they would have a composite dialogue," said Mr. Singh.

At the same time, Mr. Singh said the country's foreign policy now had clearer focus, sense of maturity, and a proactive character. "The UPA Government has given a foreign policy which is purposeful, result-oriented and proactive. Today, there is general recognition that India's destiny is being guided by steady hands backed by both experience and wisdom."

Mr. Singh said he had initiated mechanisms for coordination with other Ministries and agencies as well as State Governments, particularly those bordering the neighbouring countries. "We are closely coordinating our diplomacy with the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in respect of securing energy supplies for India in different parts of the world."

Differences with U.S.

On Indo-U.S. relations, Mr. Singh said despite the fact that both the countries were vibrant democracies there was a difference in perspective on specific

issues. The UPA Government had expressed concern over the U.S. move to sell a weapons package to Pakistan, which included surveillance aircraft and anti-tank missiles. "We have pointed out that the supply of arms to Pakistan at a time when India-Pakistan is at a sensitive stage will have a negative impact. We have also conveyed that the arms supply would also impact on the goodwill that the U.S. enjoys in India, particularly as a sister democracy."

On the possible supply of F-16 aircraft to Pakistan, Mr. Singh told the House that India had cautioned the U.S. Government against such a decision. He assured Parliament that in case the U.S. supplied arms to Pakistan, the UPA Government "will not hesitate to take steps to ensure that our defence preparedness is not compromised in any way".

The Minister said that the country shared a strategic and time-tested relationship with Russia, which had been further boosted by Russian support for India's candidature to the U.N. Security Council with veto power.

On ties with China, he said the relations with Beijing were on the upswing. He referred to the Prime Minister, Manmohan

Singh's meeting with his Chinese counterpart and quoted Mr. Wen Jiabao as saying that his visit to India in March would be the most important item on his agenda.

Mr. Singh said the UPA Government had refocused India's foreign policy by giving priority to relations with neighbours, and referred to the number of high-level visits from neighbouring countries.

Referring to the visit by Myanmar's head of state, the first in 26 years, Mr. Singh said it had resulted in important cross-border projects being taken up and coordinated action to deal with insurgency and extremist activities in the border areas. The Government had high regard for Aung San Suu Kyi and it would continue to encourage the process of democratisation in Myanmar.

Mr. Singh also reiterated India's support for the cause of the Palestinians and referred to the all-party delegation led by him to the PLO Chairman, Yasser Arafat's funeral. One of the key achievements of his Government had been its "Focus Africa Policy" and "Look East Policy". "We have given a new dimension to our partnership with ASEAN countries," Mr. Singh said.

09 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

08 DEC 2004

India to sell itself to neighbours

Pramit Pal Chaudhuri
New Delhi, December 7

A SURPRISED Arunachal Pradesh government played host this weekend to Indian foreign secretary Shyam Saran who came to inspect the state's roads to China. It was just the latest sign of an aggressive foreign ministry drive to give India's neighbourhood a genuine stake in the region's most vibrant economy.

South Block believes India's foreign policy cannot be seen as credible unless it does a lot more to improve relations with its neighbours. India is "not selling

itself as an opportunity" to the countries next door.

The foreign ministry is pushing on several fronts. First, South Block is preparing a "comprehensive plan for cross-border infrastructure."

Today, for example, a Nepalese coming by road to India finds the roads and customs posts on his side of the border are in better shape than the ones in India.

India's roads, rail links and border outposts to most of its neighbouring countries are embarrassingly poor. More importantly, they preclude any largescale trade and people-to-people links.

Second, South Block is launching an outreach programme with India's states on cross-border infrastructure. A foreign ministry team has already visited Guwahati to help sensitise the state's administration and media on its stake in the new foreign policy orientation. A similar programme will be held in Chandigarh and one is planned in Trivandrum.

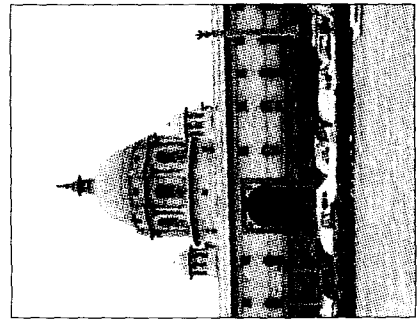
South Block is talking of setting up offices in key state capitals. The foreign ministry is also dealing almost daily with other agencies of the government, ranging from the ministry of surface transport to the North-

east Council. Foreign Minister K. Natwar Singh used the term "the domestication of diplomacy" at the HT Leadership Initiative last month.

Third, India needs to change its own mentality about regional cooperation.

While New Delhi accepted it as a "concept," it often failed to follow through in any material way. India also had to drop its "episodic" interest in its region, alternating crisis management with lengthy indifference. South Block concedes Indian policy has often seemed arrogant.

Continued on page 2



NEW FOREIGN POLICY

Land of opportunity Sell India as an investment destination to neighbours

Border makeover Checkposts must be spruced up to look good

Infrastructure Roads leading to the border must be made motorable to facilitate trade

Involve states MEA will set up offices in key state capitals to deal with investment issues

Bottomline Get neighbours to develop economic stakes in India

India prepares to relook Iraq policy

By Indrani Bagchi/TNN

New Delhi: India is preparing for a strategic relook at its Iraq policy, striving to unshackle it from the self-imposed constraints of a 2003 Parliament resolution.

The trend, which became visible during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's first letter to US President George Bush after the latter's re-election, promises to find concrete utterance during the visit of Iraq foreign minister Hoshiyar Zebari to India later this month. Manmohan told Bush India was ready to assist with the Iraq elections, scheduled to be held in January.

As a first step, India has offered to train 30 Iraqi electoral officials in India, but the government is clearly ready to go beyond making contributions in procedures and arrangements. The elections, the government feels, are a useful instrument for India tossing its hat into the Iraq ring yet again.

With a declared 'hands-

off" policy on Iraq surviving the NDA government, India has found itself increasingly marginalised in the global stakes in Iraq and clearly missing out on the action. The bedrock of India's shift comes from the realisation that Iraq's stability is in India's interest which is reach-

ing out to West Asia in a new way.

From energy to strategic stability in the Islamic world, India wants a more hands-on role.

On a more practical level, India finds itself isolated from the Iyad Allawi government in Baghdad. India had earlier delicately turned up its nose at the "interim" nature of the government which had been "imposed" by Washington. But in its desire to distance itself from US policies in Iraq, India may have shot to the other end of the spectrum, particularly as

other countries, including Iran, EU, Arab League and even Pakistan, have engaged substantively with this government. And this notwithstanding any new political formation, even if Shia-led, that the January elections might throw up. Recent reports that Pakistan may be

paving the way for a troop deployment in Iraq has been a blow for Indian diplomacy.

The Indian government

is walking a tightrope here. Not only is it hamstrung by the resolution to avoid being seen to endorse the US action in Iraq, it will also have to manoeuvre around the Left parties resolute opposition to any involvement in Iraq. The Left has clarified recently that it would not object to India training Iraqi officials in India, without civilians or military personnel setting foot in that country.



India now a major player in East Asia

Vir Sanghvi
Vientiane, November 30

Hf 3
112
» **NEWS ANALYSIS**

A COUPLE of months ago, addressing an Indo-Asean business summit in New Delhi, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh used the phrase 'arc of advantage' to describe Asia. That phrase came back to haunt him when he met J. Koizumi, the Prime Minister of Japan, at the Asean summit in Laos.

"What did you mean by that," Koizumi asked him. Manmohan Singh explained that while the West described part of Asia as an arc of instability, he saw the many advantages that Asia posed — at least from an economic perspective.

Of course, what neither Koizumi nor Singh mentioned was that they were talking about two different Asias. When the West talks about an unstable Asia, it means the Middle East or West Asia. And Asean (and the rest of East Asia, including Japan) sees itself as being a completely different entity — stable, forward looking and industrialised, with a prosperity that is not based on a single natural resource (oil) as is the case with West Asia.

But if West Asia is an arc of instability and East Asia is an arc of prosperity, then where does India — representing the bulk of South Asia — fit in?

For many years, (especially after the 1962 war with China) India has focussed on West Asia, a region with which it has historical ties and a shared Islamic legacy.

In the 1990s, the Narasimha Rao government launched a Look East policy and since then, India has paid more attention to East Asia — a region with which

it also has historical links and of course, a shared Buddhist legacy.

Till recently, however, East Asia regarded India with a slight disdain, had no patience with its democratic tradition and flaunted its economic progress over India's slow rates of growth.

No longer.

One of the lessons of this Asean summit is that India now matters more to East Asia than it has for a long time. And the East Asian nations are enmeshed in troubles that they could not have foreseen a decade ago. Many of the cosy assumptions that East Asia has traditionally held sacred are now under threat.

The economic crisis of 1977 — blamed on international currency speculators — was the first jolt. Then, individual countries have had their own economic problems.

The Japanese boom is dead in the water and Korea has emerged as a major rival to Japanese brands all over the world. The growing importance of China in global politics worries the Japanese and makes other East Asian nations nervous, though most are reluctant to say this openly.

To all this, add a growing problem with Muslim fundamentalism. Indonesia faces a major al-Qaida related terrorism threat and Malaysia is concerned about growing Islamic extremism.

Even within Asean partners, there are growing tensions on the issue.

Thailand, faced with Muslim militancy in the south, has responded with extreme force. Malaysia has been openly critical of Thai-

land's treatment of its Muslim minority and Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has threatened to walk out of the Asean Summit if any country raises Thailand's Muslim problem.

So, while Koizumi and other East Asian leaders might like to contrast their stability and prosperity with the volatility of West Asia, the reality is that even East Asia has serious problems of its own.

All this makes the East Asians look at India with a new interest. India now has one of the fastest growing economies in the world and has managed to combine growth with democracy, a feat that many Asean leaders once regarded as impossible to pull off.

Not only is India a growing market for East Asia — the Japanese, in particular, are perturbed about having being supplanted by the Koreans — it also has more Muslims than any country other than Indonesia. And yet, no Indian has joined the al-Qaida and there is no Islamic terrorism in India (with the possible exception of Kashmir).

Over the last three years, global interest in the Muslim world has focussed on West Asia and on Arab Islam. But there are more Muslims in South and East Asia than in the Arab world. At some stage, they will become the focus of global attention. And India's experience with secularism and democracy could become a role model.

So, as East Asia prepares to face this century and to avoid the problems that have plagued West Asia, India, long regarded as the sick man of Asia, suddenly finds that it is now a player.

01 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Pragmatism holds the key

Asia News International
Vientiane, November 29

PRAGMATISM OVERSHADOWS principles in Indian foreign policy in the 21st century. This is more than evident at multilateral forum like Saarc and Asean.

Here in Vientiane even as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh meets his Asian counterparts to establish what he calls 'an arc of advantage' ranging from India to Japan, he must, per force, include Myanmar in that arc.

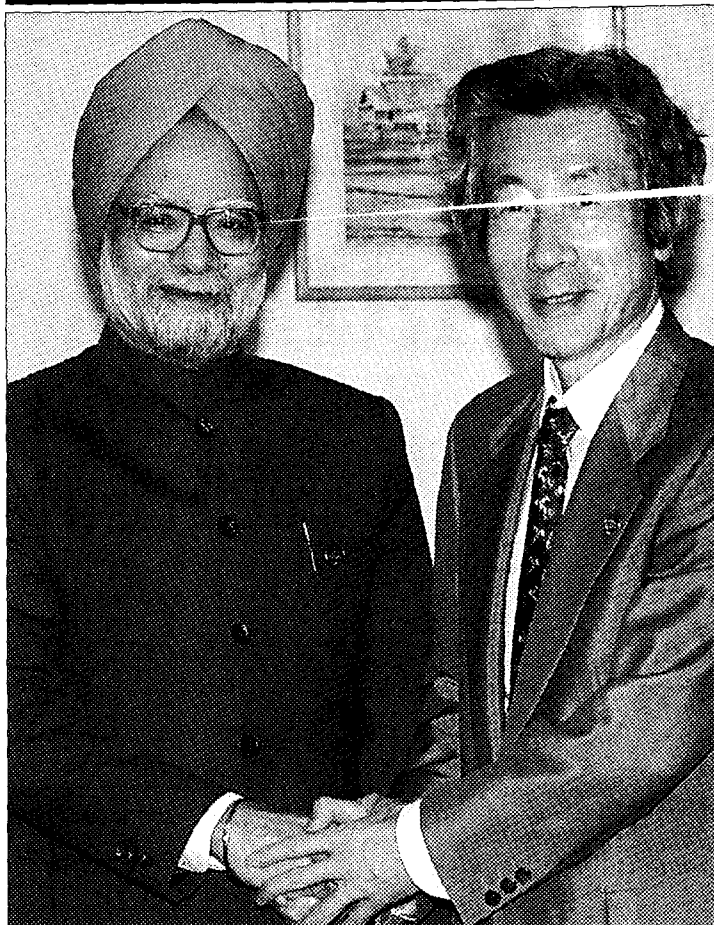
And include it without mentioning the fact that to earn a respectable place in the comity of nations, Myanmar should immediately shed its repressive nature of governance.

Rajiv Sikri, secretary (East), when asked by a foreign correspondent whether India was doing enough to encourage democracy in Myanmar, replied that while India thought that democracy was the preferred form of government everywhere, whether in Pakistan or in Myanmar, "we do not have an ideological or fundamentalist posture in this regard."

This seemingly innocuous question is asked of every Asean delegation and the reply is almost the same that Myanmar should move towards a more democratic set up or else a regime that gives more human rights for its people.

But most Asean nations do not have thriving open democracies as India and that is probably why the question is tricky when it comes to India ignoring human rights violations and the absence of democracy in its immediate

ASEAN ARC OF ADVANTAGE



Manmohan Singh with Japanese PM Junichiro Koizumi on Monday.

neighbourhood.

The Prime Ministers of Singapore and Japan who met Singh in separate meetings expressed

their admiration of India's steady growth and prosperity. Singh said that India saw Singapore as the gateway to Asean.

Besides the fact that Singapore facilitated India's entry into the elite group of nations as a summit-level partner, Singapore had a special place in India's priorities.

India's commerce secretary S.N. Menon said that India was looking for a comprehensive trade protocol with Singapore. in

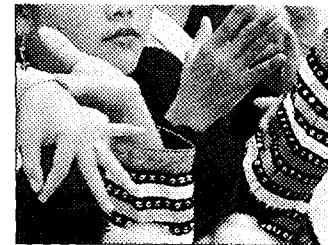
the near future, which would include an FTA element. Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong invited the Indian prime minister to his country.

During his meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, Singh expressed the desire for greater Indo-Japanese ventures like the Delhi Metro project.

Koizumi observed that India was the point of international focus and Japan was watching its progress with great interest. India and Japan have agreed to form a joint study group to explore all areas of cooperation including trade and investment.

Using the same etymology as Singh, Koizumi too talked of creating an arc of prosperity from India to Japan, as opposed to the arc of instability further north and west.

Counter-terrorism and India's experience and expertise in battling jihadi militancy too came up for discussion at various levels of consultations in the past two days. India has joint working groups on terrorism with some Asean nations, individually, such as with Singapore, Japan and Indonesia. Counter-terrorism also figures in several Asean documents that India has signed as a collaborator.



AFP

Lao girls welcome delegates in Vientiane on Monday.

Hassle-free day relieves Laos

Agencies
Vientiane, November 29

THE FACES are less tense and the muscles are relaxed. Security forces, all pervasive in the Laotian capital, are aware that the systems they have been rehearsing for weeks are in place and working well.

Hosting 10 heads of state of the Asean group as well as heads of India, China and Japan, after all, is no mean task for any nation, let alone the reclusive and tiny landlocked country of Laos.

Security is extremely tight at all venues where the heads of state or delegations were meeting. The director of the government's media department Yong Chanthalangsy has left no stone unturned to hire as many young translators and technicians as he can find to expose them to the first ever international event in this country labelled as 'least developed' by the western world.

Troops in green and khakis have been stationed at various places in the city and all cars entering the venues are being checked. They are on the lookout for anti government Hmong militants who may try to disrupt the event.

This Prime Minister is a reluctant traveller

Continued from P1

Urbane, well-educated, widely-travelled (he has lived in New York and is familiar with much of the world) and quick to grasp the nuances of foreign policy, he has been a huge hit wherever he has gone.

In Bangkok, he more or less took over BIMSTEC. In New York, he put India-

Pakistan relations back on track after a meeting with General Musharraf and now, in Laos, he has had fruitful bilateral meetings with a host of Asian leaders. So why doesn't Manmohan Singh like to travel? Why is he always itching to get back home?

Even in the months ahead, he expects to spend relatively few days on the

road. He makes his first bilateral visit (to Mauritius) in December and then, there's the Saarc summit in Dhaka. If there are other trips, they will be hit-and-run affairs.

Aides say that the PM is still to be convinced that he can justify travelling abroad when there's so much to be done at home. His style is to delegate and he

is content to leave Foreign Minister Natwar Singh in charge of foreign policy — though even Natwar Singh keeps pressing Manmohan Singh to travel more.

In the first few months of this government, it is Natwar who has racked up enough frequent-flyer points to fly around the globe twice over (in First Class) while Manmohan has mi-

nded the store at home. But should a Prime Minister who is India's greatest asset be content to show little of himself to the world? Or would India gain much more if Singh developed a liking for travel? At the end of his first year as Prime Minister, these are the questions that Manmohan Singh will have to ask himself.

30 NOV 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

India inks major deal with EU

9-11 9/11 **Stands To Get Preferential Treatment In Export Of Textiles** 9-f-muigh
p-m-u

By Arindam Sen Gupta/TNN

The Hague: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has travelled 6,407 km to sign a document here on Monday. Presumably, it's aimed at putting India on the road to becoming a strategic partner with the European Union, a status enjoyed so far by only five other countries: the US, Canada, Russia, Japan and China. Perception-wise, therefore, the PM's visit will take India into the big league.

Obviously, India is not economically at par with any of the other five. Therefore, if the EU is offering to upgrade ties with India, it's more a recognition of its potential, particularly its emerging market and technological prowess. The initiative to upgrade came from the EU, which felt India was emerging as a regional and global leader, engaging increasingly on equal terms with other world powers.

Perception apart, what does India stand to gain? One of the key areas is textiles. The quota system is getting phased out by the end of the year and this spells huge opportunity for our textiles indus-



Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende (left) greets Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at The Hague on Monday

try. New Delhi wants a joint working group to oversee the new arrangement and carry out necessary adjustments. As India's textile exports are just below 12.5% of the EU's total textile exports, it stands to get preferential treatment. Above that you don't get

GSP (generalised system of preference), as is the case with China and Pakistan.

Politically, India wishes to extend its dialogue with the EU on anti-terrorism to cover narco-terrorism, money laundering, document security and cyber terror-

ism, as well as set up channels of communication between the enforcement authorities of the two sides. Traditionally, European nations have tended to be woolly-headed about terror, often citing issues like the root cause to interpret terror in Kashmir. New Delhi finds it discriminatory and has put the point across forcefully.

A joint press statement after the summit attended by the PM, external affairs minister Natwar Singh and commerce minister

► **Entry into EU job market, Page 19**

Kamal Nath from India's side and Dutch PM Jan Peter Balkenende, EC boss Romano Prodi and EU trade commissioner Pascal Lamy from the EU side reiterated most of this. The EU has offered and India has accepted cooperation on UN matters. This could be a precursor to getting European support for its candidature for the UN Security Council. This apart, the two sides will get into conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction (this, of course, doesn't include Iraq).

9 NOV 2004 THE TIMES OF INDIA

সংস্কার নিয়ে ফের আশ্বাস

৯/১১ জানুয়ারি - ১

মুশারফ-সূত্র কার্যত খারিজ মনমোহনের

g. Foreign Policy

দ্য হেগ, ৮ নভেম্বর: কাশ্মীর-সমস্যা মেটাতে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের দেওয়া সমাধানসূত্র কার্যত খারিজ করে দিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। আজ হেগ-এ এক সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে তিনি বলেন, “জম্মু ও কাশ্মীর ভারতের অবিচ্ছেদ্য অঙ্গ। তার সমস্যা নিয়ে তৃতীয় কোনও পক্ষের সঙ্গে আলোচনা চালানো হবে না।” প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বক্তব্য, পাকিস্তানের মাটি ভারতে সন্ত্রাস ছড়ানোর কাজে ব্যবহার করতে দেওয়া হবে না বলে গত জানুয়ারিতে মুশারফ যে আশ্বাস দিয়েছিলেন, তা ইসলামাবাদ রক্ষা করলে ভারত কাশ্মীর-সহ বকেয়া সমস্যাগুলি মেটানোর লক্ষ্যে সবরকম চেষ্টা চালাতে রাজি।

পাশাপাশি, ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের সঙ্গে বৈঠকে যোগ দিতে নেদারল্যান্ডসে এসে ভারতের আর্থিক সংস্কার কর্মসূচি সম্পর্কে অনাবাসী ভারতীয় বিনিয়োগকারীদের আরও এক দফা আশ্বাসবাণী শুনিয়েছেন মনমোহন। তিনি বলেছেন, সরকার বদলালেও ১৩ বছর আগে শুরু হওয়া আর্থিক সংস্কার বন্ধ হয়নি। তাঁর সরকারের সহযোগী বামেরা আর্থিক সংস্কারের ক্ষেত্রে ‘অবুঝ হয়ে’ প্রতিবন্ধকতা তৈরি করবে না বলে দাবি করে মনমোহন বলেন, “বামেরা জানেন, কোনটা সম্ভব, কোনটা নয়।” তাঁর কথায়, এই প্রশ্নে এখন যে বিতর্ক চলছে, তাকে ‘স্থায়ী সমস্যা’ ভাবার কারণ নেই।

সম্প্রতি ইসলামাবাদে একটি ইফতার পার্টিতে মুশারফ বলেন, কাশ্মীরের কোনও একটি অঞ্চলকে চিহ্নিত করে পুরোপুরি সেনামুক্ত করা হোক। তার পরে দু’দেশের যৌথ অথবা রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের নিয়ন্ত্রণে আনা হোক এলাকাটিকে। সেই প্রস্তাবকে তখনই ‘অবাস্তবোচিত’ বলে উড়িয়ে দিয়েছিলেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়। সরকারি ভাবে অবশ্য বলা হয়েছিল, প্রকাশ্যে বিবৃতি নয়, সার্বিক আলোচনার মাধ্যমেই সমস্যার সমাধান খুঁজতে হবে। মনমোহন কাল বলেছিলেন, মুশারফের ওই প্রস্তাব নেহাৎ কথার কথা। আজ তিনি বলেন, “পাকিস্তানের কাছ থেকে সরকারি ভাবে প্রস্তাব পেলে সরকারি ভাবে আমাদের মত জানাব।”

কাল লন্ডনের সংবাদপত্র ‘ফিন্যান্সিয়াল টাইমস’-এর তরফে মনমোহনের কাছে জানতে চাওয়া হয়, ভারতের সঙ্গে সমস্যা মেটাতে মুশারফ যে বুকি নিচ্ছেন সে কথা মাথায় রাখলে তাঁর প্রস্তাব সরাসরি খারিজ করাটা কতটা যুক্তি সঙ্গত। জবাবে মনমোহন বলেন, “২৪ সেপ্টেম্বর প্রেসিডেন্ট মুশারফের সঙ্গে বৈঠকের সময় আমি তাঁর মতামত জানতে চেয়েছিলাম। উনি নিজের মত জানিয়েছেন। কিন্তু সেই সঙ্গে বাস্তব অবস্থা স্বীকার করে নিয়ে এটাও বলেছেন যে, ভারত বা পাকিস্তানের পক্ষে গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়, এমন প্রস্তাব নিয়ে আলোচনা চলতে পারে না। তবে, পাকিস্তান সীমান্ত-পার সন্ত্রাস বন্ধে ব্যবস্থা নিলে আমরা সবরকম প্রস্তাবই বিবেচনা করতে রাজি।” স্থায়ী সমাধানের লক্ষ্যে ভারত ও পাকিস্তানকে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ক সুদৃঢ় করতে হবে বলেই মন্তব্য করেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। তৃতীয় পক্ষের মধ্যস্থতার সম্ভাবনা খারিজ করে দিয়ে তিনি বলেন, “সমাধান বাইরে থেকে চাপিয়ে দেওয়া যাবে না।”

এ দিকে, কাশ্মীর-সহ বকেয়া সমস্যা মেটাতে ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের সম্মিলিত উদ্যোগকে স্বাগত জানিয়েছে ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়ন। ইউনিয়নের তরফে প্রকাশিত বিবৃতিতে বলা হয়েছে, সন্ত্রাস ও হিংসামুক্ত পরিবেশে সার্বিক আলোচনার মধ্য দিয়েই ইতিবাচক ফল পাওয়া যাবে বলে তারা আশাবাদী। ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের ঘনিষ্ঠ সম্পর্ক দুই দেশের পাশাপাশি গোটা দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার পক্ষেই শুভ বলে মন্তব্য করেছে ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়ন। মনমোহনের সঙ্গে কাশ্মীর নিয়ে তাঁর কথা হয়েছে বলে জানিয়েছেন ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের প্রেসিডেন্ট ও নেদারল্যান্ডসের প্রধানমন্ত্রী ইয়ান পিটার বালকেনেডে।

গণবিধ্বংসী অস্ত্রের প্রসার ঠেকাতে পাঁচ দফা কর্মসূচিতে স্বাক্ষর করেছে ভারত ও ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়ন। এই কাজে যৌথ উদ্যোগের কথা বলার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের ভূমিকা আরও বাড়ানোর উপরে জোর দেওয়া হয়েছে। বালকেনেডের সঙ্গে আজ ইরাক, আফগানিস্তান ও পশ্চিম এশিয়ার পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে আলোচনা করেন মনমোহন। রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের সংস্কার নিয়েও তাঁদের মধ্যে কথা হয়েছে। যৌথ পরিকল্পনার অঙ্গ হিসাবে দু’পক্ষই সন্ত্রাস নিয়ন্ত্রণের জন্য আন্তর্জাতিক মহলকে চাপ দেবে। জঙ্গিদের হাতে যাতে অস্ত্র ও অর্থ না পৌঁছায়, বিভিন্ন দেশকে তা সুনিশ্চিত করতে বলা হবে। জোর দেওয়া হবে সীমান্ত সুরক্ষার উপরে।

সন্ত্রাসবাদ মোকাবিলার মতোই অর্থনৈতিক ও রাজনৈতিক সম্পর্ক দৃঢ় করতে কৌশলগত সমঝোতাতেও দু’পক্ষ একমত। বৈঠক শেষে প্রেস বিবৃতিতে বলা হয়েছে, দ্বিপাক্ষিক বাণিজ্য ও বিনিয়োগ বাড়তে ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে। সহযোগিতা বাড়বে শিক্ষা, চলচ্চিত্র, পর্যটন, মহাকাশ প্রযুক্তি ক্ষেত্রেও। — রয়টার্স, পি টি আই

সংঘাত নয়, মনমোহনের মতে সমন্বয়ই পথ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৫
নভেম্বর: তুমি আমার সঙ্গে না বিরুদ্ধে,
আমার পক্ষে না ওদের পক্ষে— এমন
বাঁধাধরা সাদাকালোয় বিশ্বাস করেন না
প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ।
আমেরিকায় জর্জ বুশের জয়ের দু'দিন
পরেই এক আলোচনাসভায় ভারতের
ভবিষ্যৎ ভূমিকার কথা বলতে গিয়ে
এই মন্তব্য করেছেন তিনি।

সন্ত্রাসবাদের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াইয়ের
জন্য জর্জ বুশের বিখ্যাত উক্তি (হয়
তুমি আমাদের সঙ্গে, নয়তো ওদের
সঙ্গে) যে তাঁর আস্থা নেই, তা বুঝিয়ে
দিয়ে মনমোহন বলেছেন, বহু মত ও
পথের সমন্বয় সাধনই ভারতের
অবদান। তবে তিনি সন্ত্রাসবাদের
বিরুদ্ধে লড়াইয়ের প্রশ্ন সম্পর্কে এই
মন্তব্য করেননি। তাঁর এই মন্তব্য
'সভ্যতার সংঘাত' (সরল অর্থে,
মুসলিম দুনিয়া বনাম বাকি দুনিয়া)
প্রসঙ্গে। শুধু এই ক্ষেত্রেই নয়,
অর্থনৈতিক ক্ষেত্রে বিশ্বায়নের প্রসঙ্গেও
সংকীর্ণ দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির বাইরে গিয়ে
সমন্বয়ের পক্ষপাতী তিনি। এ পথেই
এগিয়ে ভারত বিশ্বে আলাদা জায়গা
করে নেবে বলে তিনি আশাবাদী।

বুশের জয়ের পর তাঁকে অকুণ্ঠ
সমর্থন জানানোর মনমোহনের উপরে

বিস্তর চটে গিয়ে আজই সি পি এমের
পলিটবুরো বিবৃতি দিয়েছে। কিন্তু
মনমোহন কৃষ্ণাঙ্গ ভাষায় জানিয়ে
দিয়েছেন, গণ-মারনাস্ত্র, পরমাণু অস্ত্র
প্রসার রোধে এবং সন্ত্রাসবাদের
মোকাবিলায় তিনি সারা বিশ্বের সঙ্গে
হাত মিলিয়ে কাজ করবেন। তবে তার
মনে কখনওই কোনও ধর্ম বা বিশ্বাসের
বিরুদ্ধে প্রস্তুতিই একে দেওয়া হবে না।
এই প্রসঙ্গেই নাম না-করে বিজেপি-কে
কটাক্ষ করে তিনি বলেন, এ দেশেও
অনেকে 'শুধু সভ্যতার সংঘাতে
বিশ্বাসই নয়, তাকে প্রস্রয়ও দেন'।

মনমোহন মনে করেন, এ পথে
চলেই ভারত অতীতের সঙ্গে সামঞ্জস্য
রেখে নিজের ভিন্ন স্থান আদায় করে
নেবে। পৃথিবীর বৃহত্তম গণতন্ত্রের শীর্ষ
নেতা বলেছেন, গণতন্ত্রের প্রসার
ভারতের লক্ষ্য। কিন্তু তার জন্য ভারত
কোথাও হস্তক্ষেপ করবে না, কোথাও
অহেতুক নাক গলাবে না। বরং,
গণতান্ত্রিক প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলিকে জোরদার
করার চেষ্টা করবে।

ভারতের নির্বাচন কমিশনের
ভূমিকা উল্লেখ করে তিনি বলেছেন,
দেশের মধ্যে নির্বাচন অনুষ্ঠানে
সফলতাই শুধু নয়, পৃথিবীর অন্যত্রও
কমিশনের সাহায্য চাওয়া হচ্ছে।

ইরাক নির্বাচনে ভারত থেকে কেউ যাবে না

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৮
অক্টোবর: নির্বাচনের প্রয়োজনীয়
প্রশিক্ষণ দিতে ভারতীয় সরকারি
কর্মীদের ইরাকে পাঠানো হবে না বলে
বামপন্থীদের আজ আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন
প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। এই বিষয়ে
বামপন্থীরা আজ তাদের আপত্তির কথা
প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে জানান। সিপিআই নেতা
ডি রাজা বলেন, “প্রধানমন্ত্রী একমত
হয়েছেন। উনি বলেছেন, সরকার
ইরাকে নির্বাচন কর্মী পাঠানোর কথা
আপাতত ভাবছে না।”

ইরাক মার্কিন সেনার নিয়ন্ত্রণে
থাকা অবস্থায় সে দেশে শান্তিরক্ষায়
ভারতীয় সেনা পাঠানো যাবে না বলে
সংসদে আগেই ঐকমত্যের ভিত্তিতে
প্রস্তাব গৃহীত হয়েছিল। বলা হয়েছিল,
রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের হাতে নিয়ন্ত্রণ থাকলে তবেই
ভারত সে দেশে সামরিক-রাজনৈতিক
প্রক্রিয়ায় অংশ নিতে পারে। তার আগে
শুধুই ত্রাণ ইত্যাদির কাজে অংশ নেবে।
সেই প্রসঙ্গ তুলে বামেরা আজ জনতে
চান, সাধারণ সরকারি কর্মীদের
ক্ষেত্রেও এই প্রস্তাব প্রযোজ্য কিনা। ডি
রাজার বক্তব্য, প্রধানমন্ত্রী জানিয়েছেন,
এটা সবার ক্ষেত্রেই প্রযোজ্য।

তবে বাগদাদে কর্মী না পাঠালেও
ভারতের মাটিতে ইরাকিদের নির্বাচনী
প্রশিক্ষণের প্রসঙ্গে বামপন্থীরা কঠোর
মনোভাব নিচ্ছেন না। তাঁদের বক্তব্য,
রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের অধীনে এই কর্মীরা এলে
অবশ্যই তাঁদের প্রশিক্ষণ দেওয়া যেতে
পারে। সকালে প্রধানমন্ত্রী বাম দলের
নেতাদের ডেকেছিলেন প্রাতঃরাশে।
বামপন্থীদের প্রধান আপত্তি দুটি
কারণে। এক, ভারতীয়দের নিরাপত্তার
প্রশ্ন। দ্বিতীয়ত, আমেরিকা ও মিত্র
শক্তির কবলে রয়েছে ইরাক। এই
অবস্থায় সেখানে গেলে মার্কিন
কর্তৃপক্ষের অধীনে ভারত সরকারের
কর্তাদের কাজ করার অভিযোগ উঠতে
পারে। ফলে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের অনুরোধ এলেই
যেন প্রশিক্ষণের বিষয়টি সরকার ভেবে
দেখে, প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে এই আর্জি জানান
বাম নেতারা।

কিছু দিন আগেই আফগানিস্তানে
নির্বাচন হয়েছে। আফগানিস্তানের
ভোটকর্মীদের ভারত প্রশিক্ষণ
দিয়েছিল। কিন্তু তা নিয়ে আপত্তি
ওঠেনি। কারণ, আফগানিস্তানে মার্কিন
সেনাবাহিনী থাকলেও তা রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের
অনুমোদন মেনেই এসেছিল।

ANADARATAR PATRIKA

Keep looking East

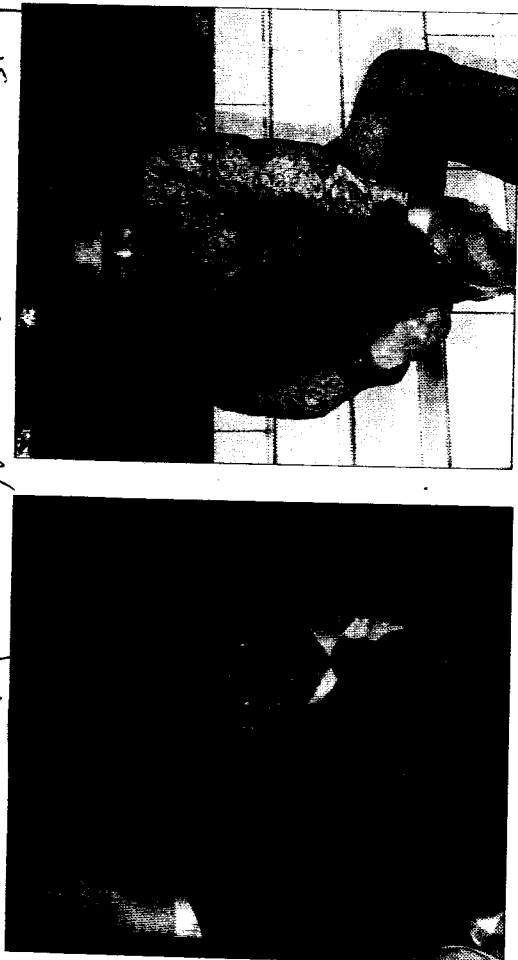
The visit to Delhi of South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun provides a marker for how far we have come in developing our relations with the Far East. A decade ago, Mr Narasimha Rao paid the first visit to South Korea by an Indian Prime Minister. It was the start of the 'Look East' policy, by now an overused phrase. Liberalising India, its economy beginning to soar, was looking for trade and investment in Korea, the unstoppable dynamo at the edge of Asia. Mr Rao met some of the business leaders who controlled Korea's famous *chaebols*, the vast and complex conglomerates that dominate Korean industry. The response was immediate: within weeks, Mr Daewoo, head of his own corporate empire, was in India; just a few months later, the first Daewoo motor cars were on India's roads. Mr. Daewoo was regarded as something of a maverick among the more deliberate decision makers of Korea's business world, and his group has had its share of troubles since, but it was he who showed the way. Today, South Korea is a major business partner and Korean brand names are household words in India.

While this has gone well and is considered satisfactory by both parties, more was possible and remained unachieved. India's dismantling of its system of permits and licenses was a slow and often tentative affair — indeed, the process is even now incomplete. There was no answering call in New Delhi to the free-for-all spirit of Korean enterprise. The reforms instituted by Dr Manmohan Singh at the start of his tenure as finance minister had made India look interesting to the high growth economies of Asia but there was a gap between promise and performance. Thus while infrastructure development was selectively opened to foreign investment, the procedures remained opaque and not much actually happened on the ground. Korea's exceptional skills in the construction of super-highways are well recognised everywhere, especially in our neighbour China

All our land routes eastward pass through Myanmar, which is the country we have to deal with in order to develop new access routes into ASEAN. Currently, relations with Myanmar are reasonably cooperative but our differences over the detention of Aung San Su Kyi and the suspension of democratic practice in Myanmar are not to be brushed aside. At the same time, the NE States have been pressing for routes outward, which is a matter that has been much discussed of late and need not be repeated here. What is worth re-emphasising is that there is a strategic and political aspect to some of the essential decisions relating to the direction of the Look East policy. It cannot be regarded as an economic initiative alone.

Looking East will encourage us to observe more carefully what has happened in Indonesia in the last few weeks. The presidential election in that country that has led to the ouster of Ms Megawati and the victory of Mr Yudhoyono is a most striking development. For many Indians, Ms Megawati was a link with the heroic days of the independence struggle when India and Indonesia fought shoulder to shoulder, and they may regret her removal. But the democratic process that led to the success of Mr Yudhoyono compels respect. It is not the first election since the fall of General Suharto seven years ago yet the manner in which it was conducted and the undisputed acceptance of the results by all the parties is to be applauded. These elections underline the potential of Indonesia as a major South East Asian country with an important role in a region with which India's interests are increasingly being linked.

Engaging with ASEAN and other Asian countries to the east of us will always be an easy matter, for there are differences of practice and approach in some areas. What is necessary is to strengthen our dialogue not only on economic matters but also on the core issues of state concern that we both face today.



President Roh Moo-Hyun and (right) president-elect Mr Yudhoyono. — AFP

ernments have pursued the same objective. But to concentrate on economic issues alone as we tended to do at the start seems insufficient today and there is the sense that a wider relationship needs to be developed if a proper partnership is to blossom. The Korean President's visit offers some signs that we have moved towards such a relationship: bilateral talks aimed at a stronger economic relationship but also included discussions on international peace and security, reform of the UN system, the ASEAN Regional Forum where both countries are members, denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula which is an important South Korean concern, the WTO parleys, and others.

wide angle

SALMAN HAIDER

There are some other factors to be taken into account in our Asian policy.

Delhi sees change in Musharraf

K.P. NAYAR

New York, Sept. 25: A day after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh held an hour-long meeting with General Pervez Musharraf, it is emerging that the low-key joint statement which summed up their talks is a laboured exercise in understatement.

Musharraf offered at the meeting to consider all possible options on Kashmir.

Indian officials with a historic memory of Indo-Pak relations point out that this is the first time any Pakistani leader has deviated from Islamabad's rigid stand on Kashmir and shown a willingness to explore options other

than self-determination for Kashmiris on the issue of joining Pakistan or remaining within the Indian Union.

Sources who have been briefed on the talks between Singh and Musharraf — at which even note-takers were not present — said the General offered to build on what he had already done under US pressure to scale back financial and military help to cross-border terrorism.

Musharraf offered to choke off supplies to terrorists already active in Kashmir, estimated by Indian intelligence officials at about 15,000.

He told Singh he is a much misunderstood man in India.

The Prime Minister told Musharraf that if it becomes

clear to terrorists that Pakistan is no longer mentoring their sinister operations, substitutes will be discouraged from crossing into Jammu and Kashmir.

India's assessment after yesterday's talks is that Musharraf has shown signs of being a changed man. They believe domestic and global compulsions have made it imperative for the General to augment his international credibility: one way of doing so is to show flexibility with India and move forward with the peace process.

They also believe there is an atmosphere in Pakistan that is more conducive than ever before to the idea of burying the hatchet with India.

The encouragement for a gas pipeline from Central Asia through Pakistan, expressed in yesterday's joint statement, is said to be an Indian concession to foster the popular idea that there are benefits for both countries in putting an end to bilateral confrontation.

India is basing its assessment on a number of circumstantial evidences as well. The General excluded his foreign secretary Riaz Khokar, a confirmed hardliner on India, from his delegation for the talks with Singh.

Khokar, unusually for a foreign secretary, did not come to New York at all. Secondly, it has been confirmed by Pakistani sources that the draft of

Musharraf's address to the UN General Assembly this week was never shown to that country's ambassador to the UN, Munir Akram.

Akram has made a career in Pakistan's foreign service from India-bashing. Musharraf's speech to the General Assembly was unprecedentedly soft on India. There was only one brief reference and it struck a hopeful note for peace in South Asia.

In previous years, Musharraf has devoted several paragraphs in his UN address to attacking India. So did Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, without fail, year after year.

All these signs encouraged Singh to have an hour-long one-to-one meeting with

Musharraf. Such a meeting was to originally last only 15 minutes: the delegations were to assist their respective leaders for the remainder of the scheduled one-hour talks.

Instead, 15 minutes after the two delegations sat down with Singh and Musharraf, the leaders decided they wanted to frankly and freely talk with no one else present.

To the surprise of officials on both sides, that talk went on for one whole hour.

Last night, the Prime Minister's wife, Gursaran Kaur, made up for the Indian delegation's inability to reciprocate Musharraf's gesture in giving two sentimentally significant gifts to Singh: a painting of his old school in Gah and his

marksheet from that school.

The gifts took the Indians by surprise and they had nothing to give Musharraf. Gursaran Kaur had brought with her some watercolours of old Delhi scenes, which she arranged to be sent to Musharraf, who was born in Delhi.

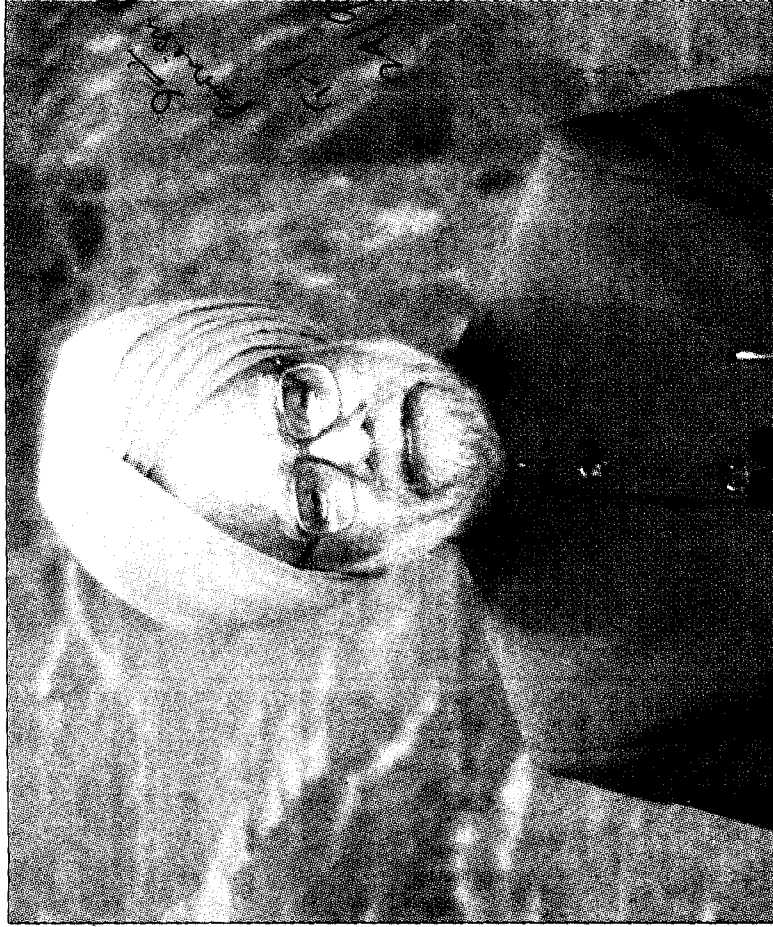
After a hectic week, Singh today spent a quiet day lunching with his old friend and internationally renowned economist, Jagdish Bhagwati.

He spent the rest of the day with his daughter, Amrit, who is a civil rights attorney in New York.

Tomorrow, the delegation accompanying Singh is planning to celebrate his official birthday on the plane as he returns to India.

PM sends a message to US, refers to non-aligned without naming either

Subtle Singh in Nehru nudge



K.P. NAVAR

New York, Sept. 23: Manmohan Singh today took India back to the Nehruvian roots of its foreign policy when the country's first Prime Minister was named for the first time in several years in an address to the UN General Assembly.

It was not just that Nehru was named. The thread of Nehru's thinking permeated much of his speech.

The address marked a return to multilateralism, which the NDA government had not jettisoned; but it was never the sheet anchor of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government's foreign policy, which stressed bilateralism for six years.

Singh told the General Assembly that "virtually every major issue that we face as a nation states has both a domestic as well as a transnational dimension. It is becoming increasingly apparent that unless we fashion a global response, based on consensus, to these challenges, we would not succeed in creating a world that manifests the ideals of the UN."

The Prime Minister was careful not to tamper with the facade of the so-called national consensus in the country's external affairs.

But the speech was full of nuances. There was implicit

criticism of the US without actually naming the world's remaining superpower. "International networks of terror appear to cooperate more effectively among themselves than the democratic nations that they target," he said in a comment that will certainly be noted in Washington.

He also spoke about the US double standards on terrorism, but again without naming any country.

"We speak about cooperation, but seem hesitant to commit ourselves to a global offensive to root out terrorism... This must change. We do have a global coalition against terrorism. We must now give it substance and credibility, avoiding selective approaches and political expediency."

Having successfully initiated the second phase of the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP) with the Americans during his meeting with President George W. Bush, Singh said India "has an impeccable record of non-proliferation" of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

The assertion was aimed at countries obsessed with the slogan of non-proliferation, which have unspoken concerns about the NSSP.

He told the world body a home truth that few other leaders are prepared to say on record. "Only a global consensus of willing nations"

would prove to be effective in controlling the spread of WMD, he said, citing the example of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

"It is through representative institutions rather than exclusive clubs of privileged countries that we can address global threats posed by proliferation of WMD..."

As expected, Singh referred to Rajiv Gandhi, whose name has been missing from speeches by an Indian Prime Minister to the UN for several years. He spoke about the late Prime Minister to stress that the central tenets of the 1988 Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan for Complete Nuclear Disarmament still remained valid.

Singh did not mention non-alignment by name. But everything that non-aligned nations stood for during the prime ministerships of Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi was all over his address.

If Singh was a messenger of economic liberalisation at the New York Stock Exchange yesterday, at the UN today it was the vintage Singh, the former secretary-general of the South Commission, which articulated many aspirations of the Third World in the 1980s.

In this incarnation today, he spoke about global poverty, the negative aspects of globalisation, the need for development and the social aspects of the UN's work.



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh addresses the UN General Assembly on Thursday.

Picture by Jay Mardal/On Assignment

PMS decide to bury past, look ahead

Blair skips NPT clause, Singh UN statement on Iraq

JYOTI MALHOTRA
LONDON, SEPTEMBER 20

BRTAIN denied it had double standards on terrorism, even as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh sought to downplay public differences with the Western world on Iraq by offering to train and rehabilitate sections of the Iraqi population such as its police.

At a press conference, after a 45-minute meeting with Singh, British Prime Minister Tony Blair insisted that London "totally and absolutely condemned any terrorism in Kashmir as in other parts of the world — we don't have any equivocation about this."

Later, taking a leaf out of the "strategic partnership" between India and the US, both countries agreed to expand cooperation in the fields of civilian nuclear activities, space programmes and high-technology trade, expand defence cooperation and invoke the power of the enormous Indian diaspora in this country.

A joint declaration called "The Prime Minister's Initiative, Towards a New and Dynamic Partnership" was signed here this afternoon by Singh and Blair, which despite the jargon contained some nuggets capable of transforming the relationship to a new level.

Blair avoided any distinctions between "freedom-fighters" and "terrorists", jargon that has often divided the western world and India over Kashmir, instead reiterating London's unconditional support for a seat for India in a reinvented Security Council.

In turn, Singh said, "it was more important to look into the future than delve into the past", in a reference to the UN Secre-

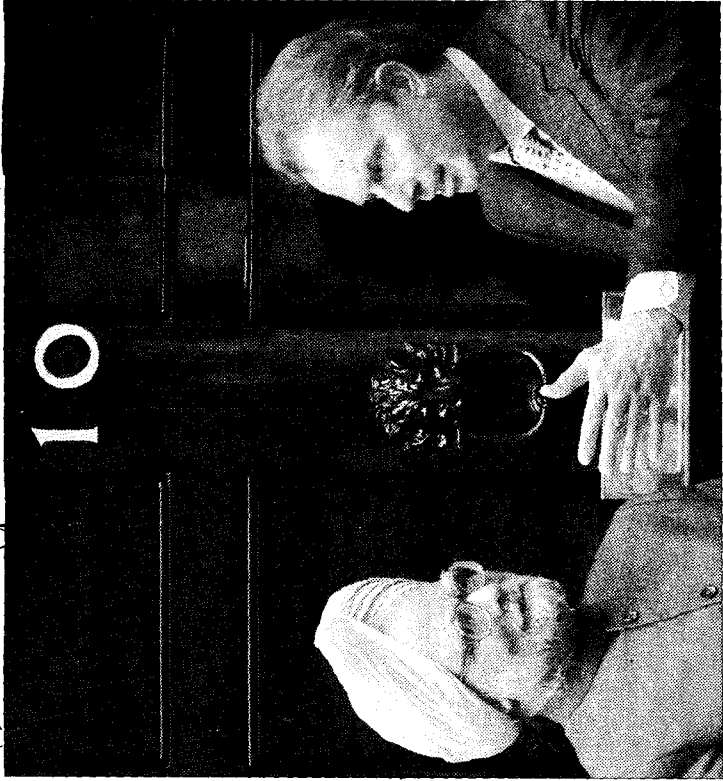
tary-General's recent description of the Iraq war as "illegal". Clearly, he didn't want to embarrass Blair standing beside him. So, he commended the restoration of normalcy in Iraq and also used the occasion to sell India as a country which cannot be ignored any more, not only because of its population and size, but also because it was a unique experiment in democracy. "We are trying to build on our diversity a cohesive nation," Singh said.

Blair, at the receiving end of months of criticism on Iraq, seemed relieved that he only had to support India's candidature for the Security Council. "India is a country of 1.2 billion people. If it is not represented then that's not in tune with the times in which we live."

Appropriately, even as both countries committed themselves to combating terrorism — a reference to the sometimes ugly formulations on "Kashmir" brought up by the local Pakistani community — London has, for the first time, agreed to promote cooperation in the area of civilian nuclear activities. As India remains opposed to signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), even in the six years after it went nuclear, London had been coy about engaging New Delhi in this arena.

Today's joint declaration makes no mention about the NPT, clearly a concession to the Indian government, but instead speaks of an expansion of "high-technology trade". This is clearly a reference to a covert wink and nod that both countries have set themselves work to do in the years ahead.

Both sides also committed themselves to "reinforcing (our) strategic partnership — build upon and expand programmes of joint military training and exercises... explore the co-production of defence equipment". The last is a reference to the Hawk jet trainer deal, while British Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon will soon pay a visit to India.



Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair on the steps of Downing Street following his meeting with his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh on Monday. Reuters

Bush-Singh breakfast key to 'partnership'

JYOTI MALHOTRA
LONDON, SEPTEMBER 20

IN THE teeth of domestic criticism over "moral hypocrisy" of the US, and India's "commitment" to the non-aligned movement, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will unveil his first major foreign policy initiative tomorrow when he signs a joint statement with President Bush. The statement includes a US commitment to transfer nuclear high technology and galvanise trade in dual-use items, prohibited currently.

Singh will have breakfast with Bush at the opulent Waldorf Astoria hotel in Manhattan where the American delegation usually stays during its annual pilgrimage to the UN General Assembly.

An announcement on the 'Next

pushed for the NSSP in the face of opposition within the establishment which often tried to shoot down the idea — first put together between former prime minister A.B. Vajpayee and George Bush in January — on the grounds that New Delhi should not be seen to be doing business with a country that had dabbled in such "moral hypocrisy." Moreover, there was India's major commitment to the non-aligned movement to think of.

At stake was an Indian commitment that it would not transfer the highly sophisticated technology it got from the US to third countries. This was especially key for technology for IAEA- safeguarded nuclear power plants and space organisations.

Through the debate between NSSP detractors and protagonists, sources said, the Prime Minister asked one question: Would it be easier for India to get better access to high-technology if it signed a guarantee that it would not transfer these "dual-use items" to other countries?

Top officials from the Atomic Energy Commission, ISRO, DRDO, the Foreign Office, Defence ministry and Home ministry debated the matter at home. In Washington, meetings at all levels that involved US Commerce secretary Ken Juster, slowly finalised the matter.

Tuesday's breakfast is significant for another reason: While Singh will hardly raise the subject of the rise and fall in voter surveys — that reflect a badly divvied America which goes to polls in November — the fact remains that the PM will also be meeting "candidate" Bush, aiming to be re-elected to the world's most powerful office.

Singh pronounced himself grateful for the time and the opportunity on board Air India One only yesterday, describing it as an "indication of the importance the US Government places in India under Bush."

But the PM has also been careful not to be seen to be taking sides in what is already a rather vicious presidential campaign. So he will meet Hillary Clinton, a key Democrat and Senator from New York, and perhaps speak to her husband, Bill Clinton, currently recuperating from his heart surgery. A meeting with Democratic presidential candidate is being ruled out because John Kerry is campaigning elsewhere in America.

The joint statement includes American commitment to shift nuclear high tech and galvanise trade in dual-use items

Foreign policy on PM visit agenda

NILOVA ROY CHAUDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept 18. — Nearly all of India's major foreign policy concerns will be dealt with when the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, visits New York for the 59th session of the UN General Assembly next week. Other than reforms to the United Nations, and India's claim to a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, the visit, Dr Singh's first exposure to "big ticket diplomacy", will also tackle the issue of terrorism (including cross-border terrorism), and address India's relations with the United States, Pakistan and Britain.

The reason the visit is significant, a senior official said, was because it provides the "bigger picture", providing a global overview to more limited bilateral or trilateral interactions, however substantive. Thus, leaders of Germany, Japan, Brazil and India, all claimants to a permanent seat on the UNSC, meeting on the sidelines of the UNGA to push for reforms and expansion of the UNSC, adds to the pressure on the world body to implement reforms.

India, officials said, was looking for an expanded UNSC, with both more permanent and non-permanent members on board, to make it more reflective of

today's world. The UN has a membership of 192 now, compared to 50 countries when it was founded in 1945. It was also looking at a more substantive role, with some decision-making powers, for the UNGA, the general body of the organisation, to make it more effective as the world's supreme multilateral forum. The UN's effectiveness has been repeatedly called into question, with the Iraq war the latest blow to its authority.

The Prime minister departs for London on Sunday, where he will meet his counterpart, Mr Tony Blair, to provide an impetus to bilateral ties. A memorandum of understanding on science and technology and enhanced economic cooperation are also envisaged.

Dr Singh is due to meet US President, Mr George W Bush, on Tuesday over breakfast, and they are expected to firm up the next steps in the strategic partnership, particularly relating to transfers of high technology, and boost economic cooperation. The Prime Minister, in his first "getting to know" meeting with the US President, will aim to further firm up bilateral cooperation.

The next day, Dr Singh will meet the Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf before the latter addresses the world body.

The new foreign trade policy

By Muchkund Dubey

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The Government has still a long way to go towards fully integrating the trade policy with the development policy.

ON AUGUST 31, 2004, Kamal Nath, Union Minister for Commerce & Industry, announced India's Foreign Trade Policy for the next five years. It is significant that we now have a Foreign Trade Policy in place of the erstwhile Export-Import Policy. In it, Mr. Kamal Nath has tried to articulate trade policy in terms of the nation's development objectives particularly employment generation, which finds a prominent place in the Common Minimum Programme. However, the Government has still a long way to go towards fully integrating the trade policy with the development policy.

Trade has long been recognised as an engine of growth (Ragnar Nurske). Trade promotes growth mainly through the positive and dynamic impact of the operation of comparative cost advantage. In the late 1950s and the 1960s, Raul Prebisch, the Argentinean economist who was the first Secretary-General of UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), had seen the role of trade in terms of bridging the foreign exchange gap involved in achieving a particular rate of growth. Subsequently, the experience of East and South-East Asia demonstrated that not only did exports help in earning the foreign exchange required for meeting the import content of growth, but the creation of export industries itself constituted a part of the development process. Export industries through their forward and backward linkages in the rest of the economy had a multiplier effect on growth.

On the other hand, export and import themselves depend on the general conditions prevailing in the economy. Empirical evidence has shown that, barring a few exceptions, export industries cannot thrive in isolation. The growth of the economy as a whole provides the springboard for the growth of the export industry.

The new Foreign Trade Policy sets the goal of doubling India's percentage share of global merchandise trade within the next five years. This kind of target has been specified several times in the past, but seldom realised. There is no assurance that this time around it is going to be any different. The target setting exercise would have carried some credibility if it had been broken into sub-targets of goals to be achieved in all the major dynamic export sectors. One

hopes such an exercise will be undertaken now to impart greater operational significance to the target.

A few sectors have been identified where export promotion efforts are going to be concentrated. These are: agriculture, handlooms, handicrafts, gems and jewellery, leather and footwear. Most of these sectors have dynamic export prospects in the world market. They also have significant employment potential. But these potentialities, for either export or employment, are not going to be realised by export incentives alone.

A much more comprehensive approach is called for. This would include the removal of infrastructural bottlenecks, induction of new technologies on a large scale, restructuring the organisation of production through institutional changes, and ensuring effective implementation of projects and programmes. Most of these tasks are beyond the scope of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. It will not be possible to realise these potentials if Mr. Kamal Nath is not fully backed by his colleagues in other Ministries, particularly agriculture and finance.

Ideally, an attempt should have been made in the Foreign Trade Policy document to spell out the measures to be taken in areas other than trade. An estimate of the financial implications of these measures and how the funds were to be mobilised was also needed.

It was surprising that textiles were not included among the dynamic sectors identified in the document. This sector is a principal source of export earning for India and is likely to remain a highly dynamic export sector in the world economy. The integration of this sector into the world trading system following the phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) by the year-end opens up vast potentialities. By all accounts, China is poised to emerge as a major global player in this sector.

There is, therefore, an urgent need for India to identify the lines of export in the textile sector in which it has competitive advantage. The country must plan for a massive induction of both resources and sci-

ence and technology inputs, and generally bring about a restructuring of the textile industry to enhance competitiveness. This cannot brook delay and should have been a part of the Foreign Trade Policy.

Another sector with great potential — services — seems to have received only lip service in the document. There is, of course, a promise of a revamp of the earlier scheme of "served from India," to create a brand, instantly recognised and respected the world over. The Government has also promised to promote the establishment of common facilities centres for home-based service providers. Finally, a new Export Promotion Council for Services is proposed to be set up.

However, on the whole, the new Foreign Trade Policy does not rise to the challenges faced by the country in the services sector. The point of services is missed in the way the target for expanding India's share of the global market is articulated. The new Policy says the objective is to "double our percentage share of global merchandise." This target does not cover trade in services, which has already reached the level of more than 70 per cent of the merchandise trade and is rising at a faster pace.

Though services figure prominently in the Doha Round of Negotiations, in terms of detailed homework the Government is ill prepared to participate effectively in these negotiations. Even basic data relating to these sectors are not available. A study done about a year ago of the educational sector in the context of the Doha Round Negotiations was perfunctory and based on fragmentary data. The conclusions were highly tentative and unconvincing. Hardly any serious work has been done to assess the export potential of individual service sectors and their ability to withstand global competition. It is understandable that a comprehensive exercise of this nature is beyond the scope of foreign trade policy and hence the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. However, the Ministry can assume a coordinating role as a part of the pursuit of its new Foreign Trade Policy.

One of the most unfortunate provisions in the Foreign Trade Policy is its promise of "ensuring that our domestic sectors are not disadvantaged in the Free Trade Agreements/Regional Trade Agreements/Preferential Trade Agreements" that we enter into to enhance exports. This provision gives a negative signal to the outside world.

This carries the implication that the Government of India intends to go back on some of the Free Trade Agreements already signed and that it is going to adopt a very timid and cautious approach to concluding them in future. This comes at a time when India's position in the world economy is going to be critically determined by the flexibility and the nimbleness displayed in taking advantage of the opportunities for bilateral Free Trade Agreements and linking up with Regional Groupings. These have emerged as an essential means for coping with the discrimination implicit in the burgeoning of mega groupings all over the world.

Such Agreements are bound to cause short time localised disruptions in the domestic sectors of the economy because those entering into Free Trade Agreements seek access to our markets in as much as we are also eyeing their markets. We have, therefore, to take a balanced long-term view of the matter. We, therefore, cannot give a blanket assurance that such agreements would not adversely affect our domestic sectors even in the short run. For example, India's exports to Bangladesh, both formal and informal, amount to nearly \$3 billion and to Sri Lanka, almost \$1 billion per annum. If there is a Free Trade Agreement with Pakistan, our exports to this country can reach a level of \$5 billion within a year or so.

If we want at least to maintain if not to expand our present positions in the markets of those countries, the least that they would expect from us is commensurate access to our markets for their products. This is bound to result in some market disruption in the short run. But in the long run this is going to be a win-win situation for South Asia. Therefore, the guarantee in the Foreign Trade Policy for safeguarding our domestic sector in the context of Free Trade Agreements needs to be urgently clarified.

(The writer is a former External Affairs Secretary.)

CEASE-FIRE ALONG LOC AND INTERNATIONAL BORDER TO CONTINUE

Talks end with Kashmir chill

7-6-04
7-6-04
7-6-04

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 6. — That Kashmir had struck a jarring note in the India-Pakistan foreign ministers' talks was clear today from the atmospherics — the way Mr Natwar Singh and Mr Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri walked out to address the media after an over hour-long meeting. The warmth and holding hands of yesterday was absent as both read from prepared statements and then outlined where the differences lay, with Mr Kasuri even summing "common sense".

"We are not imposing preconditions. But it is a matter of pure common sense... that if we wish to put our relations on an even keel, we will have to tackle with the J&K issue," Mr Kasuri said, asking for the "gloss" to be removed while he spoke of the centrality of the Kashmir issue and "human rights situation" in the state. He, however, maintained that Pakistan was "not unifocal" and was willing to talk on all issues.

Mr Singh said "differences" in perceptions persisted and India's serious concerns on cross-border infiltration remained. "We realise that the J&K issue has to be solved within the framework of the Simla Agreement, Lahore

talks and the January 2004 (joint) statement," pointing out that there was an elected government in J&K. "We have to make progress in all areas: political, economic, students exchanges, also the (oil) pipeline and the bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad," Mr Singh said, outlining some of the areas of agreement, while accepting an invitation to visit Pakistan again.

While a formal joint statement will be issued on Wednesday, when Mr Kasuri departs for Islamabad, Mr Singh said they agreed to continue the cease-fire along the Line of Control and international border, negotiate conventional and nuclear confidence-building measures (CBMs) and carry forward the composite dialogue process.

At their meeting this evening, Dr Manmohan Singh told Mr Kasuri that the two countries needed to cast off the "burden of history" and "write a new chapter". Dr Singh called for "full implementation" of the 6 January commitment of General Pervez Musharraf of not allowing any Pakistani territory for use by terrorists. He is scheduled to meet the Pakistani President in New York later this month.

Another report on page 11



PREMATURE CELEBRATIONS? Not for these Kashmiri students doing their bit of cheering during a cricket match in a women's college in Srinagar on Monday. — AFP

- Technical-level talks between the two countries in October on the Rajasthan-Sind train service
- Discussion of MoU between the Indian Coast Guard and Pakistan Maritime Force for establishing communication links

Towards confidence

- Bi-annual meeting of the BSF and Pakistani Rangers in October
- A special day bus service between Amritsar and religious places in Pakistan

- Exchange of students, diplomats
- Meeting between the two oil ministers soon
- Joint survey of the boundary pillars in the Sir Creek area
- Talks on conventional and nuclear CBMs

'Left not consulted on foreign trade policy'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 5. The Communist Party of India (CPI) today demanded a thorough review of the new foreign trade policy announced by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government and objected to the manner in which it was announced, without holding any consultation with the Left parties.

At its two-day national executive meeting, the party adopted a resolution on the policy saying it had serious repercussions. The UPA Government had made a major policy announcement without consulting the supporting Left parties, it said. "This is taking Left parties too much for granted," the CPI general secretary, A. B. Bardhan, said.

On the policy, the resolution said, the decision to import duty-free capital goods for agriculture, for second-hand implements, machinery for power generation, import of seeds, saplings and also jewellery and footwear was bound to have an adverse impact on the economy.

Loss

The decision to exempt from service tax and cess all goods and services associated with export, it said, would result in a loss of approximately Rs. 35,000 crores in a financial year while liberalisation of imports would turn the country into a dump-

It said by allowing 100 per cent FDI for setting up of free trade and warehousing zones where perhaps no law and rule of the country shall operate, labour will only be exploited and alleged that the new policy was bound to raise controversies and provoke many questions.

The party did not see any rationale in giving subsidies to exports since there was no longer any foreign exchange constraint. It said by the Government estimates, the revenue

forgone due to subsidies offered last year was nearly Rs. 40,000 crores and loss of revenue on account of subsidies and withdrawal of service tax on exports was bound to be larger now resulting in a huge drop in the revenue.

On the assertion of the Commerce Minister, Kamal Nath, that the new policy was employment-oriented, the CPI argued that its impact was bound to be negative. Similarly, encouraging export of agricultural

goods and commodities would bring about widespread diversification in the crop pattern and may result in imbalance in the availability of per capita food-grains, thereby threatening food security.

The policy, it charged, was aimed at meeting the WTO conditionality through developing exports. Incentives offered by way of liberal import would ultimately increase the gap in export earnings and import expenditure, it warned.

Government performance disappointing: CPI

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 5. The Communist Party of India said today that it was "a bit disappointed" with the performance of the United Progressive Alliance Government, and suggested that the Government adhere to the Common Minimum Programme.

"We are not encouraged by the performance of the Government during the first 100 days. We are a bit disappointed ... though we do realise that the Government had to face obstacles ... people have great expectations and many of these remain to be fulfilled," the party general secretary, A.B. Bardhan, told a press conference here.

At its two-day national executive meeting that concluded on Saturday, the CPI reviewed the latest political situation. It was felt that the Government had to adhere to the CMP and perform.

Unilateral decisions

The CPI national executive reiterated that major policy decisions should not be announced unilaterally without consulting the supporting Left parties and said that the Coordination Committee of the UPA and the Left would lose relevance if this trend continued. The announcement of the new trade policy was a case in the point, it said.

The task ahead, the CPI said,

was to address the priorities outlined in the CMP such as agriculture, rural development, employment, health, public distribution system, drinking water, etc.

The CPI also came out sharply against the BJP for "refusing to acknowledge the verdict of the people, disrupting Parliament's functioning and raising communal sectarian issues." The UPA Government should heed the concerns expressed by the Left on various economic, fiscal and political issues such as inflation and price rise, hike in the foreign direct investment cap in telecom, insurance and civil aviation sectors, and the revival of sick public sector undertakings.

ভারত-পাক

কথায় দাউদ

প্রসঙ্গে রাজি

বিরোধীরা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৩
সেপ্টেম্বর: পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে
বিদেশমন্ত্রী পর্যায়ের বৈঠকের আগে
কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার আজ জোটের শরিক
ও সমর্থকদের পাশাপাশি বিরোধী
নেতাদের সঙ্গেও বিস্তারিত আলোচনা
করে নিল। আলোচনার উদ্দেশ্য ছিল,
দাউদ প্রসঙ্গ ফের খুঁচিয়ে তুলে
পাকিস্তানের উপর চাপ তৈরি করার
প্রশ্নে তাঁদের সম্মতি আদায় করা। সেই
উদ্দেশ্যে সফল হয়েছে বলেই
রাজনৈতিক সূত্রের খবর।

আজ দফায় দফায় বৈঠক চলার
পরে বিদেশমন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র নভতেজ
সারনা বলেছেন, “প্রধানমন্ত্রী ও
বিদেশমন্ত্রী যে সব নেতার সঙ্গে কথা
বলেছেন তাঁরা সকলেই আলোচনার
ব্যাপারে সরকারের মনোভাব সমর্থন
করেছেন।” মনমোহন সিংহের সরকার
পাকিস্তান সম্পর্কে বেশ কিছুটা কড়া
মনোভাব নিয়েই এগোবে। যে বিষয়টি
নিয়ে ইসলামাবাদ সবচেয়ে বেশি
অস্বস্তির মধ্যে পড়ে, দাউদ ইব্রাহিমকে
পত্রপাঠ ফেরত দেওয়ার সেই দাবিও
সরকার তুলতে চলেছে। সাম্প্রতিক
অতীতে সচিব-পর্যায়ের বৈঠকে এই
একই উদ্দেশ্যে ভারত অপরাধী-
প্রত্যর্পণ চুক্তি করার প্রস্তাব দিয়েছিল
পাকিস্তানকে।

আজ আজ সকালে প্রথমে
প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ কথা বলেন
সদ্য প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী
বাজপেয়ীর সঙ্গে। ওই বৈঠকে ছিলেন
বর্তমান বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ এবং
সদ্য প্রাক্তন বিদেশমন্ত্রী যশবন্ত সিনহা।
এর পর বসে শাসক সংযুক্ত প্রগতিশীল
মোর্চার বৈঠক। ওই বৈঠকে পি ডি পি-
র মেহবুবা মুফতি, লোকজনশক্তির
রামবিলাস পাসোয়ান, ডি এম কে-র
মুরাসলি মারান এবং আর পি আই-এর
রামদাস অটওয়ালে উপস্থিত ছিলেন।
মেহবুবা বলেন, ভারত-পাকিস্তানের
আলোচনার মধ্যে কাশ্মীর প্রসঙ্গটি সব
সময়ই কেন্দ্রবিন্দুতে থেকে যায়। এবং
সেই কারণেই দুই কাশ্মীরের মধ্যে
যোগাযোগ বাড়ানোর দিকে নজর
দিতে হবে। এরপর নটবর দুই
কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির শীর্ষ নেতাদের সঙ্গে
কথা বলেন। বিকেলে সি পি এমের
সাধারণ সম্পাদক হরকিষণ সিংহ
সুরঞ্জিত দেখা করেছেন সনিয়ার সঙ্গে।

পাকিস্তানের বিদেশমন্ত্রী খুরশিদ
মেহমুদ কাসুরি আজ রাতে
নয়াদিল্লিতে এসে পৌঁছেছেন। রবিবার
তাঁর সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসবেন
ভারতীয় সরকারি প্রতিনিধিরা।
ভারতের বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ সেই
আলোচনার বিষয়বস্তু নিয়েই আজ
বিভিন্ন নেতার সঙ্গে কথা বলেছেন।
তবে ভারত যে এ ক্ষেত্রে খুব একটা
নমনীয় মনোভাব নিচ্ছে না, তা ঘোষিত
বক্তব্য থেকেই স্পষ্ট। সরকার পক্ষের
বক্তব্য, আলোচনা চালিয়ে যাওয়া এবং
ধীরে ধীরে এগোনোই বাঞ্ছনীয়। সারনা
বলেছেন দুই বিদেশমন্ত্রীর বৈঠকে
দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ক ও সামগ্রিক
আলোচনার অগ্রগতির পর্যালোচনা
করা হবে। কাল ভারতীয় বিদেশসচিব
শ্যাম সরনের সঙ্গে পাকিস্তানের
বিদেশসচিব রিয়াজ খোঙ্করের
আলোচনা হবে। এই মুহূর্তে ভারতের
তরফে দেওয়া ৭২টি প্রস্তাব ও
পাকিস্তানের তরফে দেওয়া বেশ কিছু
প্রস্তাব নিয়ে কথাবার্তা বকেয়া রয়েছে।
এর মধ্যে একটি হল অপরাধী প্রত্যর্পণ
চুক্তির জমি তৈরি করা ও দাউদ
ইব্রাহিম-সহ ২০ জন অপরাধীকে
ভারতের হাতে তুলে দেওয়া।

আগরা সম্মেলনে দাউদের প্রসঙ্গ
তোলেন স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী আডবাণী। কিন্তু
মুশারফ দাউদের পাকিস্তানে থাকার
কথা অস্বীকার করে বলেন এ সব
ভারতের কূট কৌশল। পরবর্তী
কালেও আডবাণী দাউদ-প্রসঙ্গে সরব
ছিলেন ও ইসলামাবাদের উপরে চাপ
দেওয়ার জন্য ভারত আমেরিকারও
দ্বারস্থ হয়েছিল। চাপের মুখে পারভেজ
জানিয়ে দেন যা করা তাঁর পক্ষে সম্ভব
নয়, তা নিয়ে পীড়াপীড়ি করলে
আলোচনাই অর্থহীন হয়ে যাবে। ফলে
পরবর্তীকালে বাজপেয়ী সরকার ওই
বিষয়টি আর তুলত না।

4 SEP 2004

Russia, Nepal Burn While India Gets Breathing Space

Indian Hostages Released

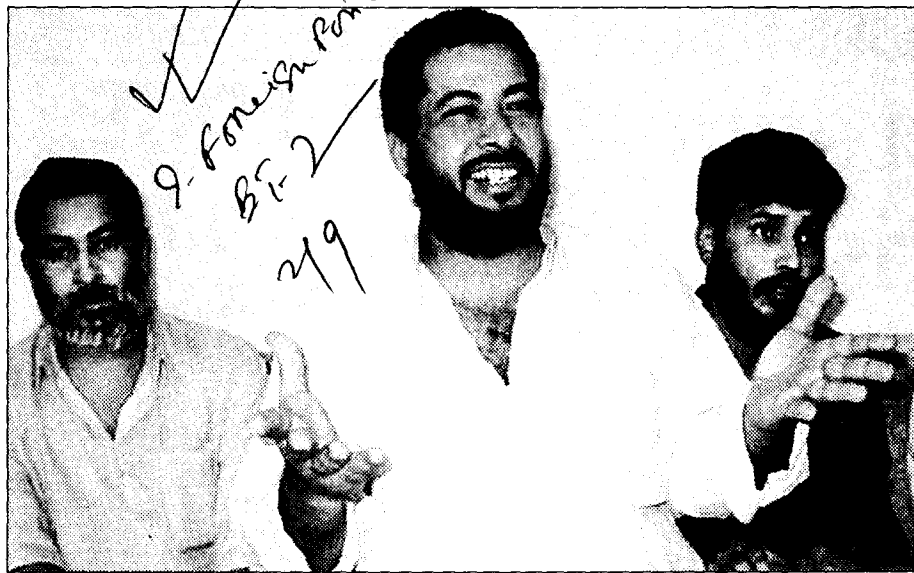
Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 1 SEPTEMBER

ENDING a six-week long ordeal, three Indian hostages, who were kidnapped on July 21, in Iraq, were set free by their captors on Wednesday. Antaryami, Tilak Raj and Sukhdev Singh walked the road to freedom, along with three Kenyans and an Egyptian. This happened after successful negotiations took place by those engaged in the crisis-handling.

The seven truck drivers working for the Kuwaiti firm KGL, were abducted by a little known militant group "Islamic Secret Army — Holders of Black Banners" who had threatened to kill the hostages if their demands were not met.

It was a jubilant external affairs minister, Natwar Singh, who made the announcement on Wednesday evening. "The hostages have been released," he said at a press conference, where he was flanked by the minister of state for external affairs, E. Ahamed, who headed the Crisis Management Group (CMG) set up to deal with the situation.

"A little while ago I spoke to



FREEDOM SONG: Egyptian truck driver Mohammed Ali (centre) and two of the three Indian hostages hear the news of their release on Wednesday. — Reuters

Antaryami. They are all happy and safe," Mr Ahamed said, adding they were on their way to Kuwait and efforts were being made to bring them home as soon as possible. "We have got them released, which is consistent with our policy, and without sacrificing any of the principles,"

he said implying that the government did not pay any ransom money to the kidnappers.

Natwar Singh also added that Mr Ahamed had already spoken to family members of the three Indians. "They are very relieved and so are we. We have had very anxious moments and it is a mat-

ter of great relief," he said. After the family of the hostages, it was the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam who were informed about the development. Concern over their safety mounted on Tuesday after 12 Nepalese hostages were brutally murdered.

Nepal turmoil forces state to seek ITBP deployment

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 1 SEPTEMBER

WITH the political situation in Nepal worsening and the state feeling the spillover effect of the disturbances in Bangladesh, West Bengal has sought immediate deployment of Indo-Tibetan Border Police personnel along the state's sensitive borders.

The state chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, who is in touch with Union home minister Shivraj Patil, is learnt to have described the situation as serious. The chief minister has emphasised the need to deploy Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel to strengthen the vigil along with the Special Security Bureau and state police along the border with Nepal.

According to the West Bengal administration, the border districts of the state have been affected by the spillover effect of the disturbances in Bangladesh, particularly after the grenade attacks in Dhaka. The chief minister told reporters in Kolkata that he was yet to receive "any response" from the Union home minister. He said he would take up the matter with the Prime Minister when he visited the capital on September 17.

In his interaction with the media, the chief minister said that about 500 Maoist guerrillas had recently threatened Indian police at the Panitanki outpost, along the border, with dire consequences, "if India seeks to interfere in Nepal's affairs." It may be recalled that several Indian business establishments had to wind up its operations in Nepal because of extortion by Maoist guerrillas. The growing ISI activities in the state is another worry for the state government. It may be recalled that the state police had seized explosives and arrested a few ISI agents in Dhanu.

Terrorists seize Russian school

Jonathan Thatcher
MOSCOW 1 SEPTEMBER

A heavily armed gang took 400 children as hostage at a Russian school near Chechnya on Wednesday. They threatened to kill 50 children for each person of their group who was killed, a senior local official said. The attack bore the signs of a Chechen rebel operation.

The gang of up to 17 men and women stormed into the secondary school in Beslan in North Ossetia province during a ceremony to mark the first day of the new school year.

Latest reports said that contact was established with the armed gang and negotiations were underway.

"They have said that for every fighter wiped out they will kill 50 children and for every fighter wounded they would kill 20," regional interior minister Kazbek Dzantiyev told reporters in Beslan. The first day of the school year is traditionally a festive occasion in Russia, which mothers attend with their



TEARS FOR FEARS: A television grab shows Russian girls near the school where the hostages are being held on Wednesday. — Reuters

children. The gang, some strapped with explosives and reported to have mined the school grounds, later set free 15 of the children, Itar-Tass news agency said. At least

eight civilians were killed in the attack — seven of them dying of wounds in hospital, news agencies quoted officials as saying. Nearly 50 children had managed to escape.

Hundreds of police, rescue officials, and interior ministry troops with AK-47 rifles surrounded the school. Armoured vehicles were parked nearby. There was confusion over the exact number of hostages with initial reports putting it at 400. Local police then put it at between 125-150 but later raised the figure back to 300-400. Tass said 132 children were among the hostages.

President Vladimir Putin, who broke his holiday to return to Moscow to deal with the latest in a wave of violence linked to separatist rebels in Chechnya, dispatched his interior minister and head of the FSB security service to the scene. Russia called for a UN Security Council meeting on "terrorist acts" in the country, Tass reported. The school attackers rebuffed an attempt by a local Muslim leader to talk to them and demanded a meeting with top regional officials. — Reuters

410-1 FOREIGN TRADE POLICY ANNOUNCED

119 No service tax on exports

By Sushma Ramchandran

NEW DELHI, AUG. 31. The United Progressive Alliance Government today released its first-ever foreign trade policy to double India's share of global trade to 1.5 per cent in the next five years.

In a major relief to exporters, the policy does away with the service tax on exports while seeking to give a push to employment generation by outlining a special package for agriculture exports.

Key elements

Other key elements include the creation of free trade warehousing zones, the setting up of a Services Export Promotion Council and biotechnology parks while providing special focus initiatives in the handicrafts, handloom, jewellery and leather sectors.

The import of second-hand capital goods will also be allowed without any age restrictions.

Outlining the policy, the

Commerce and Industry Minister, Kamal Nath, said the two main aims of the new foreign trade policy were to double the country's share of global trade by 2009 as well as to act as an effective instrument of economic growth by giving a thrust to employment generation. "Trade is not an end in itself, but a means to economic growth and national development," he said.

At a press conference, Mr. Kamal Nath said the main challenges faced in seeking a 20 per cent export growth in the next five years were the hardening rupee, the rising world crude oil prices and the lack of adequate infrastructure.

Even so, he felt the export target must be kept high to sustain the growth momentum.

The Board of Trade would no longer remain a mere "formality" and would not only be revamped but also headed by someone outside the Government.

A multipronged strategy was

needed to attain the policy objectives and this could not be devised within the four walls of Udyog Bhavan and could only happen in partnership with trade.

On the import of second-hand capital goods, he said this would not result in dumping and no other country had such restrictions.

Highlighting the need to unshackle controls and simplify procedures, he said that all goods and services exported would be exempt from the service tax while exporters with a minimum turnover of Rs. 5 crores and a good track record would be exempt from furnishing bank guarantees in any of the schemes. This would reduce exporters' transaction costs.

A new scheme to establish Free Trade and Warehousing Zones (FTWZs) has been introduced to make India a global trading hub. Foreign direct investment will be permitted up to 100 per cent and each zone will have a minimum outlay of Rs. 100 crores.

Giving details of the agriculture package, Mr. Kamal Nath said the Vishesh Krishi Upaj Yojana was being introduced to boost the export of flowers, fruits, vegetables, minor forest produce and their value added products. Capital goods imported under EPCG (export promotion capital goods) for agriculture would be duty-free under the scheme.

'Target Plus' scheme

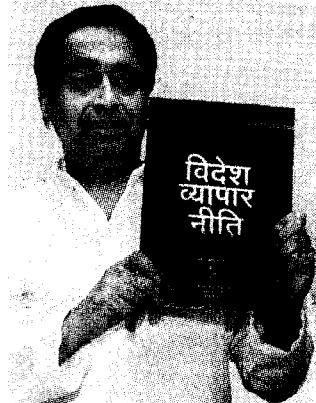
In addition, another new scheme called "Target Plus" was being launched to achieve a quantum growth in exports. This would help exporters achieve a quantum growth with duty-free credit based in incremental exports higher than the general export target.

As for the popular DEPB (duty entitlement pass book) scheme, he said it would continue till replaced by a new WTO-compatible scheme.

**Editorial on Page 10;
Reactions on Pages 12, 15**

Highlights

- Targets doubling India's share in world trade to 1.5% by 2009.
- All goods and services exported exempt from service tax.
- 100% FDI allowed for setting up free trade and warehousing zones.
- Special agriculture initiative to boost exports of fruits, vegetables, flowers and minor forest produce.
- Duty-free import of capital goods under Export Promotion Capital Goods scheme for agriculture sector.



- "Served from India" scheme to accelerate growth in the export of services.
- Target Plus scheme for exporters to achieve quantum growth in exports.
- Duty Entitlement Pass Book scheme retained till replaced by a new WTO-compatible one.
- Restrictions on importing second-hand capital goods lifted.

India focus for
(MBA)

Horror for Poland hostage

OUR BUREAU

Mumbai/New Delhi, Aug. 5: Even as the hostage crisis involving truck drivers kidnapped in Iraq last month shows no sign of resolution, news has emerged of another Indian being kidnapped in Poland.

An external affairs ministry spokesperson has confirmed that Harish Hitange, a resident of Nashik in Maharashtra, was abducted on April 20 in Warsaw and is yet to be traced.

The kidnapers have demanded two million euros — over Rs 10 crore — in ransom, but what has caused more distress here are reports in Polish media that the hostage-takers have chopped off three of Hitange's fingers and left them in bottles in different parts of Warsaw to show they mean business.

Hitange, who works for an Indian textile firm in Poland, was on his way to work when he was abducted. A commerce graduate and a diploma holder in fashion designing, the 37-year-old had been living in Warsaw with his family for a few months. Hitange's wife Rekha was holidaying in India when he was abducted. She arrived in Mumbai tonight from Warsaw.

The kidnapping was confirmed in Nashik by the designer's father Deorao to a television channel this morning.

India has expressed concern at the kidnapping of the designer, to trace whom Polish police have set up a crack team. The external affairs ministry has said the abduction does not appear to be a political act, with spokesperson Navtej Sarna in Delhi terming the kidnapping a criminal act.

Anil Wadhwa, India's ambassador to Poland, said he was in regular touch with Polish authorities, including the President's office and the interior ministry, to secure Hitange's release.

"It is a very unfortunate incident and we are concerned about his well-being," Wadhwa said from Warsaw. He said the kidnapping could not be regarded as part of a pattern and could not be seen as a sign that law and order had broken down in Poland.

He said it was "purely a criminal act" and many locals too had been abducted by such gangs, which operate in many East European countries and elsewhere in the world.

Wadhwa said the criminals were communicating through SMS messages sent from different cell phones, adding: "The police are always trailing them."

THE TELEGRAPH

6 AUG 2001

Lessons from Iraq

Hostage Drama Exposes Elitism in Foreign Policy

By Ranjan Roy

The sight of a young wife poring over wedding photographs, thousands of kilometres away from Fallujah where her husband is staring down the barrel of a terrorist's gun brings home the truth that foreign policy isn't just a matter of debating unipolar war or fragmented peace in seminar halls. It concerns real people as they go about their daily lives and seek opportunities in a globalised world. George W Bush's Iraq misadventure is clearly threatening ordinary citizens the world over, whether or not their countries participated in the military campaign or the post-war security effort in Iraq.

The Iraq war has rolled on beyond West Asia, dragging in poor families in Kenya, Turkey, the Philippines and states like Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. The theatre of this conflict obviously extends into the homes of Antaryami, Tilak Raj and Sukhdev Singh, as foes of America find newer and softer targets.

But as families in Punjab pray for the safe return of their sons who have innocently risked their lives for the lure of a few thousand rupees, countries have to relook their terms of engagement with Washington. If the Philippines was forced to withdraw its troops after one of its citizens was threatened with death, then surely others will also have to think hard on how far they should extend help to the world's sole superpower. Emerging economies in Africa could be hard-pressed if issues of trade and aid are linked to helping America and its Iraq coalition in post-war reconstruction. Kenya's press is demanding that the country's foreign minister resign for failing to secure the release of Kenyans. Meanwhile, West Turkish truckers have refused to ferry US goods.

Similarly, countries such as India, Russia and China, where economies are set to grow around 6% to 8% annually, will find themselves increasingly dragged into global threats emanating from Washington's military adventures. The challenges are serious and immediate in the case of India. Unmindful of the risks and tempted by the dream of a new house or better education for their children, many Indians will venture out, making themselves vulnerable to events far away from home and risks they know nothing about. These aren't foolhardy men out on a dangerous adventure. They are mostly lower middle class workers who have cleaned out their savings to bribe labour agents and pay their airfare in the hope that remittances will give the families a better life. These are hardworking Indians who have helped give the country's workforce a robust image and fill RBI's foreign exchange coffers.

South Block mandarins must take on this new challenge of keeping its overseas

travellers informed of the risks, and begin to regulate amateur headhunters who often trick job-seekers into going into war zones. Foreign policy must now clearly go beyond national security to include security for citizenry. Diplomats must loosen their silk ties, unbutton their Brooks Brothers collars and get some dirt on their knees.

It is well known that government support for overseas Indians is woefully weak, whether in terms of providing consular help or information to people arriving in these new places. True, it is not the job of the embassy to settle in immigrants, but it surely could be a source of support to immigrant communities by creating forums. Many embassies do register Indian citizens, but little comes out of the exercise. When ordinary Indians need to interact with embassy officials they are treated with suspicion and disdain.

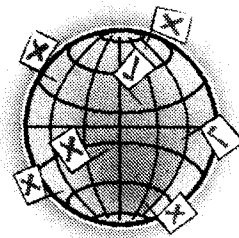
South Block has to realise that at risk today are thousands among the 1.5 million Indians who live in Saudi Arabia, because these workers, engineers and executives either work for or are associated with American companies. That was brought home with the killing of Indians in a terrorist at-

tack on an American establishment a few months ago. When the government responded to the Iraq hostage crisis by opening negotiations with the Holders of Black Banners group, what became obvious is that none in the ministry of external affairs or any security agency was prepared for such an eventuality. There weren't Arabic speakers; there was no

information on the hostages (the families are still dependent on the media for information) and evidently no intelligence on the ground in Iraq. Arabic isn't a language Indian diplomacy is understandably familiar with. Many IFS probationers go to Cairo to learn Arabic in the best classical schools, but little of it remains after their postings to Washington, Geneva or Bangkok.

New Delhi's thaw with Washington was overdue. However, the relations must now include intelligence sharing with the US and other western countries with a view to providing overseas Indians better protection. These steps have to be followed up with creating safety features for Indians as well as early warning systems that predict risks and give time for workers to evacuate their families. If Indians working in Indonesia are seen to be under threat, the embassy in Jakarta should inform them of the threat assessment, so that these people can make informed decisions.

Embassies could begin by creating helplines and websites. They should take a leaf out of the US State Department, not on formulating policy that turns friends into foes, but in keeping its citizens informed about potential hazards through detailed travel advisories.



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Govt hopeful of resolving hostage crisis

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 3 AUGUST

4/8

THE chances, of the hostage crisis in Iraq being defused perceptibly, brightened. So much so, that India on Tuesday said it had got indications of a positive end to the fourteen-day ordeal.

After a meeting of the crisis management group, the minister of state for external affairs, Mr E. Ahamed said that statements made by both Kuwait Gulf Link Co Ltd (KGL), the employers of the seven truck drivers, and the Iraqi tribal leader Sheikh Hisham al-Dulaimi pointed that "negotiations are continuing and a successful and satisfactory outcome was likely."

The government also sought to draw attention to statements by some religious leaders in Iraq, who called for the safe release of the hostages. The move, sources indicated, was part of the initiative to exert some pressure on the abductors. Mr Ahamed said the Muslim Ulema Board of Iraq and Sheikh Mohammad Bashar al-Faisi had made one such appeal. India is getting feedback on the crisis from the Arabic speaking envoy to Oman, Talmiz Ahmad who has been camping in Baghdad for the last three days.

Meanwhile, KGL said on Tuesday, in Kuwait, that it was willing to send another representative for a new round of

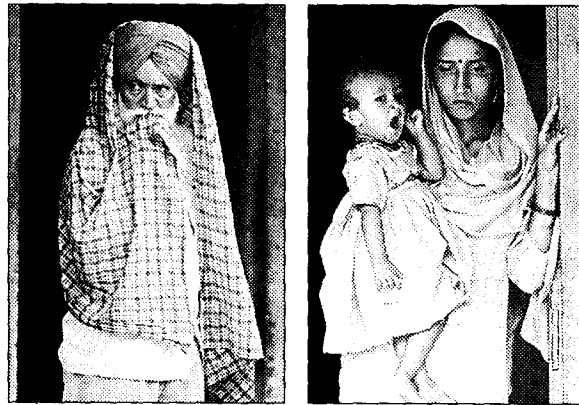
KGL keen to send another agent to Iraq

THE employer of seven truck drivers, including three Indians, held hostage in Iraq said on Tuesday it was willing to send another representative for a new round of negotiations, but its relations with a mediator appear to be souring. The company, Kuwait and Gulf Link Transport said it wanted Sheikh Hisham al-Dulaimi, the Iraqi tribal chief who has been mediating between the kidnappers and the firm, to "show total seriousness."

Al-Dulaimi announced on Sunday the negotiations had broken down and there were no longer contacts with the hostage takers. He had also accused the company in an interview with the Emirates-based satellite television Al-Arabiya of not cooperating with him.

"We have no problem with sending another representative," at the request of al-Dulaimi, Rana Abu-Zaineh, a KGL spokeswoman, said. — AP

negotiations. "We have no problem with sending another representative at the request of (Mr) al-Dulaimi," KGL spokeswoman Rana Abu-Zaineh said.



FATHER AND THE BRIDE: Antaryami's father Ram Moorty (left) and wife Kusum (right) with her daughter Sukhdeep, wait for the hostage's release in Dehlan village on Tuesday. — AP

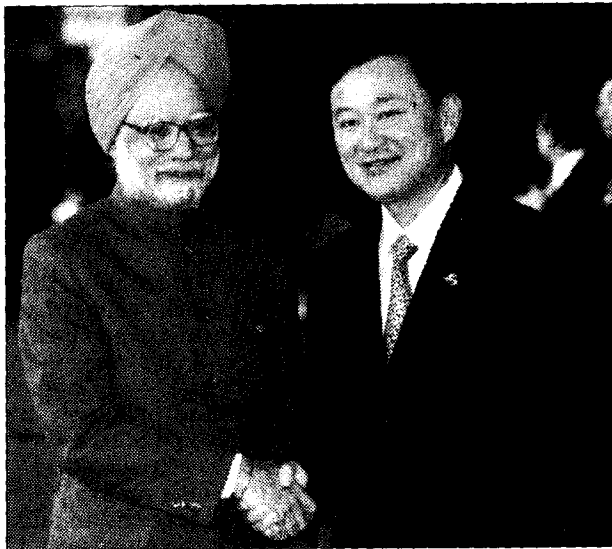
Concert of Asia to counter terror

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BANGKOK, July 31. — Concerned over continuing threat from international terrorism and transnational crimes, India and six other Asian countries today decided to set up a Joint Working Group on counter-terrorism, a decision described by the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, as an "important step" to combat the menace.

At the first summit of BIMSTEC, leaders of India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar and Nepal, representing 1.3 billion, also agreed on a slew of measures, including timely completion of the Free Trade Area negotiations to boost economic cooperation.

Giving details of the outcome of the summit, Dr Singh told a news conference here that "the setting up of a BIMSTEC JWG on counter terrorism is an important step. We agreed to hold the first meeting of this group



Thai Prime Minister Mr Thaksin Shinawatra welcomes Dr Manmohan Singh to the BIMSTEC summit inaugural in Bangkok on Saturday. — AFP

in New Delhi later this year".

He said there was unanimity on joining hands in combating international terrorism.

The member countries pledged not to allow use of their territory by terrorist groups launching attacks on friendly

governments.

There was willingness to share information and capacity building by sharing training programmes in intelligence gathering operations, the Prime Minister said before leaving for home after a three-day visit to Thailand.

India not keeping Pak out: PM

BANGKOK, July 31. — Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today said there was no question of India trying to keep out Pakistan from BIMSTEC grouping. "We are not trying to isolate any country. Pakistan is not linked geographically to Bay of Bengal and it is as simple as that," he told a press conference. He was asked if India was trying to isolate Pakistan from the seven-member regional grouping. — PTI

He said the countries felt that the security and state of law and order was very important to create basic conditions for economic development and in this context forging cooperation to combat the menace of terrorism was an important one.

THE STATESMAN

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Government keeping fingers crossed on hostages issue: Pranab

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 30. "We are keeping our fingers crossed till they [the three Indian hostages being held in Iraq] are released," the Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, said today. At this point, he stressed, it was difficult to say when the release would take place.

The Government, Mr. Mukherjee said, was not talking directly to the captors. The Kuwait & Gulf Link Transport Company, the employer of the seven hostages, including the three Indians, was, however, talking to the captors.

"We are in touch. The Crisis Management Group [CMG] is constantly discussing the situation," the Minister added. The CMG went into session following unconfirmed reports that tonight's deadline set by the kidnappers to execute one of the hostages had been extended.

Dulaimi statement

In a related development, the External Affairs Ministry said that Sheikh Hisham Al-Dulaimi, who has conveyed that he is assisting in the resolution of the hostage issue out of humanitarian considerations, had made a statement on Al Arabiya Television that the Indian and Egyptian Embassies were making efforts to secure the release of the hostages.

"He made an appeal to the hostage-takers that they should not carry out their threat to execute one of the hostages this evening. He requested them to extend the deadline so as to give an opportunity for further negotiations," the statement said.

Sheikh Dulaimi's statement follows the issue of an appeal by the Indian Embassy in Baghdad on Thursday evening, which was communicated to Sheikh Dulaimi.

According to Ministry sources, the Sheikh had earlier felt that the Embassy was not giving him the requisite importance. "The Kuwait & Gulf Link [Transport] Company has confirmed that it has established contact with Sheikh Dulaimi and a meeting between him and a Company representative is likely later today.

The Company has stated that it is willing to take whatever steps are necessary to facilitate the safe and early release of the hostages," the Ministry said. It

reiterated that the Crisis Management Group, chaired by the Minister of State for External Affairs, E. Ahamed, was closely monitoring the situation and all efforts were continuing to ensure a "successful and happy" conclusion to this incident.

"We are in contact with the family members of the hostages to apprise them of the latest developments and to reassure them of the Government's commitment to seek the safe and early return of their loved ones," the statement added.

Muslim groups' plea

Several Muslim organisations have, meanwhile, issued a joint appeal asking the kidnappers to release the hostages. The All-India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat (AIMMM), the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) and Movement for Empowerment of Muslim Indians said it would be "inhuman and un-Islamic to cause any injury" to the "absolutely innocent" hostages.

They appealed to the kidnappers "not to take any irreversible step which would erode the support the Iraqi Resistance enjoys all over the world."

"In the name of Islam and in the name of ancient ties between the peoples of Iraq and India, we unitedly call upon the militant group to release them unconditionally," they stated.

CPI(M) expresses concern

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 30. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) today expressed grave concern over the threat to the lives of the three Indian truck drivers held hostage in Iraq and asked the Government to announce that Indians would not be allowed to go to Iraq either directly or indirectly.

In a statement, the party's Polit Bureau said that it had asked the Government to respond to the demands of the abductors by announcing that Indian citizens would not be allowed to engage in any activity that would help the American occupation there.

"Even now the Government should make a categorical announcement that Indians will

not be allowed to go to Iraq directly or indirectly to work in activities connected with the American military operations," the statement said.

'Act against agencies'

The party suggested that the Government act firmly against the agencies that were recruiting Indians to be sent to Iraq illegally through Kuwait and other countries.

The party had demanded that such agencies be proceeded against.

The Government should also prohibit the Kuwait and Gulf Transport Company from recruiting Indians.

The Government should make it clear that as per Parliament resolution, it does not approve of a continued military

occupation of Iraq by the U.S. and British forces.

"These steps are necessary if the safety of the Indian hostages is to be ensured," the statement said.

Congress' concern

The Congress too expressed its concern over the fate of the hostages and said the Government was making all possible efforts to resolve the issue.

The party spokesperson, Anand Sharma, said that India is for the sovereignty of people of Iraq and Parliament had adopted a resolution stating the Indian position on the attack on Iraq.

He hoped that all efforts by diplomats and friendly mediators would succeed and the hostages would be released.

Abductors extend deadline

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Mediator In Touch With Hostages' Firm: Natwar

New Delhi: The kidnapers of three Indian nationals in Iraq have extended the Friday night deadline they had set for execution of one of them by 90 minutes, official sources said.

Quoting information received from Baghdad, sources said the deadline had been extended from 7.30 pm to 9 pm local time. The announcement followed hectic attempts by New Delhi to secure the release of the hostages and an appeal by an Iraqi tribal leader appointed mediator by the kidnapers not to carry out their threat to allow further negotiations.

In a related development, the employer of three Indians held hostage in Iraq has established contact with mediator Sheikh Dulaimi, who is assisting in the resolution of the crisis and is willing to take all necessary steps to facilitate the safe and early release of the captives, external affairs minister K Natwar Singh said on Friday.

The Kuwait Gulf Link transport company has confirmed that it has established contact with Dulaimi, who is

assisting in the resolution of the hostage crisis. A meeting between Dulaimi and a company representative is likely later in the evening, he told reporters.

The company has stated it was willing to take whatever steps were necessary to facilitate the safe and early release of the hostages, he added. Dulaimi has made a statement to Al Arabiya TV

on Friday morning, Singh said, adding that Dulaimi had said that the Indian and Egyptian embassies were making efforts to seek the release of the hostages.

He made an appeal to the hostage-takers that they should not

carry out their threat to execute one of the hostages on Friday evening and requested them to extend the deadline so as to give an opportunity for further negotiations, Singh added. Dulaimi's statement follows the issuing of an appeal by the Indian embassy in Baghdad on Thursday.

The minister said the government was closely monitoring the situation and all efforts were continuing to resolve the crisis. Agencies



The UPA government could have avoided the hostage crisis in Iraq

A penchant for blunders

DIPLOMACY

K.P. NAYAR

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Could the crisis in Iraq involving the Indian hostages have been avoided? The answer, sadly, is yes. If the United Progressive Alliance government had not rescinded the order of the former external affairs minister, Yashwant Sinha, in his final weeks in office, prohibiting Indians from travelling to Iraq, last week's hostage-taking would not have taken place at all. The previous Bharatiya Janata Party-led government barred Indians from journeying into Iraq's chaos after hostage-takers struck against an Indian once earlier, and complaints reached Sinha's office that Indians in Kuwait were being coerced by their employers into going across the border into the occupied country. There were numerous complaints that Indian workers in Iraq were being ill-treated, in some cases even subjected to what amounted to slave labour.

The ban on Indians entering Iraq that was imposed under Sinha's watch was, surprisingly, effective, unlike many previous efforts by successive governments in New Delhi to stop ill-treatment of Indian labour in Gulf states. This was because Kuwait has become progressively sensitive about its borders since it was attacked and overrun by Saddam Hussein in 1990.

The Kuwaitis have become more aware that they are vulnerable, and tightened their borders more and more. With the situation steadily deteriorating inside Iraq, the Kuwaitis are paranoid that any day something terrible — like the train bombings in Madrid in March — could happen within their small emirate. Therefore, they have ensured that people do not go back and forth from Iraq without adequate controls and accountability. Notwithstanding the pot of gold that still awaits Kuwaiti businesses willing to take risks in Iraq, Kuwait's government has not allowed these businesses to exploit the full potential of making money in Iraq by any means.

For Indians and other foreigners in Kuwait, all this meant that they had to get a no-objection certificate from their embassy in the emirate in order to cross the border into Iraq and to return to Kuwait. Sinha's order had the effect of ensuring that the Kuwaiti authorities simply shut down the movement of Indians into Iraq because Indians in Kuwait could no longer get no-objection papers from New Delhi's diplomatic mission there.

Even as Russians, Bulgarians, Turks, Germans and a host of other nationalities were being kidnapped in Iraq in recent months, Indians were not so vulnerable any more. Ill-treatment of Indian workers was becoming a routine, systemic problem in Iraq under American occupation, but with Sinha's order, that began to change.

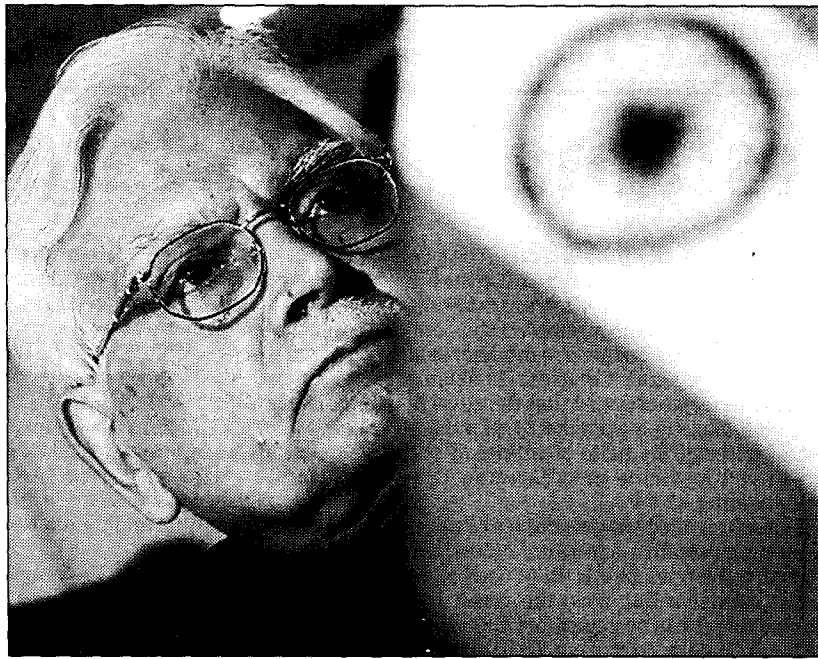
However, the new government in New Delhi made other plans soon after it assumed office. Little over a month ago, demonstrators assembled in front of the Indian embassy in Kuwait and demanded that the mission should

resume issuing the documents that would enable Indians to travel to Iraq and work there. In Kuwait, there is much speculation about the nature of that demonstration. A popular view is that it was by no means a spontaneous action by Indian labourers, but that the march was actually funded and organized by Indian recruiting agents, who stood to make a killing if the ban on Indian travel into Iraq was lifted.

There are two elements to such a charge. One is that poor, illiterate and ill-informed Indian labourers may have been told that they could make

hostages come to harm, the decision will be described as locking the stables after the horses have bolted.

But more serious is the sad reality that after having consciously created conditions that led to the kidnapping of three Indians, the UPA government compounded its act of commission by what can be charitably described as its poor handling of efforts to secure freedom for the hostages. It did not come as a surprise that external affairs minister, K. Natwar Singh, who has a penchant for putting his foot in his mouth as soon as he sees reporters or televi-



Wrong comment

their fortune in Iraq. Many Indian workers in Kuwait have no access to TV in their labour camps. Many are illiterate, cannot read newspapers and may have believed the propaganda. The second element is that these workers were told that the Indian government was standing in the way of their making money — by imposing restrictions on their travel to Iraq.

The result was that the big demonstration was, indeed, held before the Indian mission in Kuwait, a city where demonstrations are virtually unheard of. After the demonstration, a group of recruiting agents met several ministers and officials in New Delhi to plead their case for rescinding Sinha's ban on Indians travelling to Iraq. The UPA government eagerly directed the Indian mission in Kuwait to resume the practice of issuing no-objection certificates to Indians in the emirate to cross the border into Iraq.

Too late, after Antaryami, Tilak Raj and Sukhdeo Singh were kidnapped, South Block reverted to Sinha's policy of refusing no-objection certificates to Indians wanting to work in Iraq. Better late than never. If any of the Indian

sion cameras, did just that in his very first comments on the hostage crisis.

Many jaws dropped in South Block when Singh announced in Islamabad that India was in touch with the American embassy in Baghdad and that he had talked to Iraq's so-called foreign minister, Hoshiyar Zebari. Talk to them by all means, but to announce to the kidnappers that Singh was doing so was as good as signing the death warrants for Antaryami, Tilak Raj and Sukhdeo Singh. The kidnappers have no grievances against India. At least, they did not have any until Singh put his foot in his mouth again a few days later, describing the kidnappers in unflattering terms, questioning their political credentials and hinting that they were mercenaries. All that at a time when the lives of hapless Indians were entirely in their hands.

Hostage-takers in Iraq, on the other hand, do have grievances against the United States of America and against the so-called sovereign government in Baghdad. Indeed, hostage-taking activities in Iraq are motivated primarily by the political and military objectives of insurgents who want the interim

Iraqi government to collapse and the US to leave their country. Therefore, to publicly admit to talking to the Americans in Baghdad was tantamount to waving the red flag in front of a bull during a bullfight. Talking to Zebari was even worse. Announcing such a conversation to the public was as good as insulting the insurgents. Zebari is someone who cannot step out of his house in Baghdad without American protection. Without America's protection 24 hours a day, Zebari would be a hostage himself — or be history.

Diplomats in Kuwait insist that at that stage of South Block's fiasco, harm to Indian hostages was averted only because they were with Egyptian and Kenyan captives. Egypt has considerable influence in Iraq, as shown by the quiet release of Cairo's diplomat, who was kidnapped in a separate incident last Friday. As for Kenya, its government acted with greater maturity than India and made the right noises to ensure, as far as possible, the safety of its national in captivity.

Once Singh realized that he had put his foot in his mouth, he decided that discretion was the better part of valour, according to officials in South Block dealing with the hostage issue. In the process, he left everything to his inexperienced junior minister, E. Ahamed, who is in charge of the Gulf. Ahamed has never been a Central minister before. The last time he was a minister anywhere was a long, long time ago in his native state of Kerala. Ahamed is a successful politician who has won successive elections to the Lok Sabha and to the Kerala assembly. But handling a crisis management group in the Indian government requires more than political success. That Singh left Ahamed to do this on his own for the first time in his life speaks volumes for how vulnerable India has become under the UPA.

The unkindest cut of it all, from the junior external affairs minister's point of view, was that Singh did not give Ahamed the back up in South Block which was necessary to handle anything like a hostage crisis. Singh left for Islamabad without appointing a secretary in charge of the Gulf in place of R. Abhyankar, who left for Brussels to be India's new ambassador to the European Union. Abhyankar knew everyone who mattered in Iraq: he was once posted in Baghdad, and he kept up and cultivated Iraqi contacts later, as ambassador in Damascus and Ankara. He played a big role in influencing the BJP-led government's decision not to send troops to Iraq after extensive meetings last year across the length and breadth of that country.

Worse, Singh flew to Islamabad leaving South Block in the hands of a foreign secretary who was retiring in a few days, whose tenure left much to be desired. He left South Block with no other secretaries in charge except one dealing with economic relations. With such unprecedented abdication of responsibility by a minister, it is a wonder the Indian hostages are still alive.

পূর্বের দিকে তাকানো শুরু সড়ক সরাসরি জুড়বে ব্যাঙ্কক, কলকাতাকে

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

২৮ জুলাই: ব্যাঙ্কের সঙ্গে সড়ক পথে জুড়তে চলেছে বিকাশমুখী কলকাতা। শুধু তা-ই নয়, তাইল্যান্ড-মায়ানমার-ভারতের মধ্যে একাধিক জাতীয় সড়কও গড়ে তোলার পরিকল্পনা রয়েছে। আগস্ট মাসে তিন দেশের বিদেশমন্ত্রী এই বিষয়ে আলোচনায় বসতে চলেছেন। আগামী কাল প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ তিন দিনের ব্যাঙ্কক সফরে গিয়ে এই পরিকাঠামো গড়ে তোলার বিষয়টি নিয়ে আলোচনাকে চূড়ান্ত রূপ দেবেন। গত মাসে তিন দেশের বিদেশ সচিবের মধ্যেও এই আন্তর্দেশীয় সড়ক-নির্মাণ নিয়ে কথা হয়েছে। তিন দিনের এই সফরে তাই কলকাতা তথা পশ্চিমবঙ্গই সবচেয়ে বেশি লাভবান হতে পারে বলে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয়ের বক্তব্য।

এই সফরে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর প্রধান উদ্দেশ্য পূর্বের দিকে ফিরে তাকানো। কূটনীতির পরিভাষায় একে বলা হচ্ছে 'লুক ইন্ট পলিসি।' বাংলাদেশ, মায়ানমার, নেপাল, ভূটান, শ্রীলঙ্কা ও তাইল্যান্ডের মধ্যে বেশ কিছু আর্থিক চুক্তি হওয়ার কথা এই সফরে। এই রাষ্ট্রগুলি নিয়ে যে বিস্তৃত ভৌগোলিক এলাকা, তার মধ্যে অন্যতম গুরুত্বপূর্ণ শহর কলকাতা। এই দেশগুলি নিয়ে যে মঞ্চ, তার নাম 'বিমস্টেক' (বি আই এম এস টি ই সি—পূর্বোল্লিখিত রাষ্ট্রগুলির নামের আদ্যক্ষর নিয়ে নাম)। ১৯৯৭ সালে এই গোষ্ঠী গঠিত হয়। এই ছ'টি রাষ্ট্রের এটিই প্রথম বৈঠক। বিদেশমন্ত্রকে আর্থিক সম্পর্ক বিষয়ক বিশেষ সচিব রাজীব সিকারি বলেন, "বিমস্টেকের উদ্দেশ্য সফল হলে আরও বিকশিত হবে কলকাতা। কলকাতাকে ঘিরে বৃহত্তর বাজার তৈরি হবে। এই বাজার শুধু কলকাতা নয়, সামগ্রিক ভাবে ভারতের পূর্বাঞ্চল ও উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের আর্থিক উন্নতিও সাধন করবে।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী এই ব্যাঙ্কক সফর নিয়ে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যের সঙ্গেও আলোচনা করেছেন। প্রসঙ্গত, প্রধানমন্ত্রী থাকাকালীন নরসিংহ রাওই প্রথমবার পূর্বের দিকে দৃষ্টি ফেরানোর কথা (লুক ইন্ট পলিসি) বলেছিলেন। তার পর প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীও সেই একই লক্ষ্য নিয়ে এগোচ্ছিলেন। নির্বাচনের ঠিক আগে এই ব্যাঙ্ককেই বৈঠক করতে যাওয়ার কথা ছিল বাজপেয়ীর। ভোটের দিন ঘোষণা হয়ে যাওয়ায় তদারকি প্রধানমন্ত্রী হিসাবে তিনি শেষ পর্যন্ত ওই সফরে যেতে চাননি। নতুন সরকারের নতুন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ সেই অসমাপ্ত কাজ সমাপ্ত করার অভিপ্রায়ে চলেছেন।

এই বৈঠকের আরও একটি তাৎপর্য রয়েছে। সত্ত্বাসবাদ মোকাবিলায় ব্যাপারে এই বৈঠকে বিস্তারিত আলোচনা হওয়ার কথা। পাকিস্তান এই মঞ্চ না থাকায় সত্ত্বাসবাদের প্রশ্নে পারভেজ মুশারফের সঙ্গে কূটনৈতিক দর কষাকষির রাস্তাও অনেকটা থাকবে বলে আশা। বিমস্টেকের প্রধান লক্ষ্য অবশ্য আর্থিক কূটনীতি। এই মঞ্চ গঠনের মাধ্যমে চিনের আর্থিক প্রসারকেও চাপের মধ্যে রাখার একটা উদ্দেশ্য রয়েছে।

মূলত ছ'টি ক্ষেত্রে এই দেশগুলি আর্থিক সহযোগিতা গড়ে তোলার অগ্রাধিকার স্থির করেছে। এগুলি হল, পরিবহণ ও যোগাযোগ, বাণিজ্য ও বিনিয়োগ, প্রযুক্তি, শক্তি, পর্যটন, মাছচাষ। এক একটি বিষয়ের জন্য এক একটি দেশকে দায়িত্ব দেওয়া হয়েছে। পরিবহণ ও যোগাযোগের দায়িত্ব পেয়েছে ভারত। বেজিং অবশ্য ভারতের সঙ্গে তার দক্ষিণ-পশ্চিম এলাকার সংযোগ সাধনে বিশেষ আগ্রহী। শুধু ভারত নয়, তারা মায়ানমার ও বাংলাদেশের সঙ্গেও একই ভাবে যোগাযোগের সেতুবন্ধন রচনা করছে। কূটনীতির পরিভাষায় চিনের এই অবস্থানকে "কুমিং উদ্যোগ" বলা হয়। এত দিন ভারত এই ব্যাপারে বড় একটা আগ্রহ দেখায়নি। কিন্তু কমিউনিস্টরা এর জন্য এখন সরকারকে চাপ দিচ্ছে।

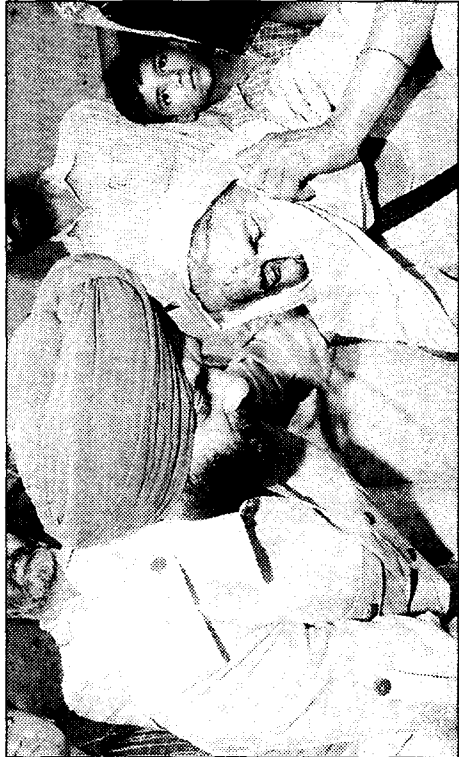
India appeals for release of hostages

New Delhi
25 JULY

As the deadline set by Iraqi kidnappers to kill the seven truckers, including three Indians, drew nearer, India on Sunday made an impassioned appeal to the abductors to set the captives free, citing historical relations between the two countries and teachings of Islam.

The minister of state for external affairs E. Ahamed issued the appeal in Arabic and English and said he had "absolute faith in the Almighty Allah to give hidayah (direction) to the group, who keep our people as hostages to release them." "There is no justification for anybody to keep innocent persons in captivity... Islam teaches everybody to be just and fair and the people of India expect that captors will also honour the Islamic way of thinking towards the innocent," he said.

He said the people of India have "great faith in the people of Iraq, who will never think of doing anything harmful to India and its people because the historical and traditional relationship between the people of Iraq and India is based on mu-



Catch-Live: All India Anti-Terrorist Front chairman M.S. Bitta tries to console Jaggal Kaur, mother of Sukhdev Singh, one of the hostages in Iraq, in Ropar district on Sunday. — PTI

released from the captors." Mr Ahamed made a similar appeal on Arab television networks, including those of Iraq, Kuwait and Oman, last night in the endeavour to get the hostages released.

The minister of state for external affairs Rao Inderjit Singh told reporters in Jaipur that the Indian government was in constant touch with Iraqi authorities to negotiate the release of the Indians and hoped they would be freed soon. Mr Singh said "efforts and negotiations are on through the Iraqi government. We are closely monitoring the situation there and are in constant touch with Iraq." The Kuwait-based transport company KGL, which employed Antaryami, Tilak Raj and Sukhdeo Singh as truck drivers, was negotiating with the kidnappers to free them as soon as possible, he said. Mr Singh refused to specify the steps being taken to get them released, saying it may jeopardise the efforts.

A group calling themselves "Black Flags" abducted the three Indians, besides three Egyptians and a Kenyan hostage four days back. The initial threat to execute the first man was to expire on Saturday but the kidnappers extended the deadline on Friday night. — PTI

tual trust, confidence and brotherhood." Seeking the release of the hostages, Mr Ahamed said: "Every patriotic Iraqi will appreciate India's principled stand that our country supports the aspirations of Iraqi people."

Describing India as "well-wishers of the people of Iraq and also the champion

of the Arab cause," Mr Ahamed said New Delhi "naturally expects" Indian hostages to be released soon. "Those who are in custody as hostages also have their families back in India, who live in tears," the minister said, adding "as a believer in God, I always hope that the Almighty will help our people in being

J. Singh Police Ex Delhi

J. G. ...
P. ...

India negotiating release of hostages

HD-1 26/7

● Appeal on Gulf TV networks

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, JULY 25. The Government today made yet another appeal — this time in Arabic — on various television networks in the Gulf region for the early release of three Indians taken hostage in Iraq by a little known group, "Holders of the Black Banners." The Minister for State for External Affairs, E. Ahamed, said that "negotiations are under way and we are hoping for a positive outcome."

Official sources said the crisis management team set up to deal with the hostage crisis was keeping the Prime Minister informed of all the developments.

Indirect contact

Mr. Ahamed told *The Hindu* that indirect contact had been established with the abductors through the employers of the three Indian hostages, the Kuwait Gulf Line Company, discussions were on, and contact had also been established with "various Islamic groups."

The Kuwaiti company had already announced the cessation of all operations in Iraq and the Indian Government had advised its mission in Baghdad to facilitate immediately the departure from Iraq of all Indian nationals wishing to leave the country, Mr. Ahamed said. Official sources added that India had warned all its nationals earlier that anyone

staying or working in Iraq would be doing so at one's own risk.

'Champion of Arab cause'

The one-page appeal by Mr. Ahamed stated that India had always been a well-wisher of the people of Iraq and a champion of the Arab cause.

"Naturally, India expects that its three citizens taken hostage by an Iraqi group will be released soon." He recalled the historical and traditional relationship between India and Iraq and said: "Every patriotic Iraqi will appreciate India's principled stand that our country supports the aspirations of the Iraqi people." Finally, invoking Islam, which teaches everybody to be just and fair, Mr. Ahamed said: "The people of India expect the captors to 'honour the Islamic way of thinking towards the innocent (hostages).'"

The Government has stated repeatedly that India had taken a firm decision against sending any troops to Iraq, raised its voice at international forums in favour of Iraqi sovereignty, opposed the invasion of Iraq by the American-led forces and had done nothing to help the American forces.

'Innocent non-combatants'

He said that India's stand was well known throughout the Arab world and "our appeal to the ab-

ductors is that they should know the Indians were innocent non-combatants."

Mr. Ahamed added that the Indian mission in Baghdad had already been instructed to facilitate immediately all Indians who desired to leave the country.

Appeal to President

Although appeals were made on Arab television networks last night, the Government was today planning to issue similar appeals in Arabic. Yesterday, some family members of the abducted Indians met the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the Minister for External Affairs, Natwar Singh, to ask them to do everything possible for the safe return of the hostages.

On July 21 the Black Banners abducted seven persons — three Indians identified as Antaryami, Sukhdeo Singh and Tilak Raj, three Egyptians and one Kenyan. The group has threatened to behead the hostages one by one.

The 72-hour ultimatum it issued, and later extended by 48 hours, runs out tomorrow night.

Initially, the group had demanded that all nationals of those countries be withdrawn from Iraq but later it added other conditions, including freeing of Iraqi prisoners.

Another report on Page 12

Delhi makes contact with captors

US hate shadow on Indian hostages

OUR BUREAU

July 22: The Indian government has succeeded in establishing contact with the little-known Iraqi militant group that has taken three Indians hostage.

Sources told The Telegraph that an Iraqi, employed in the Indian embassy in Baghdad for some 10 years, has got in touch with the Holders of the Black Banner, which has taken captive three Indians, three Kenyans and one Egyptian working as truck drivers.

Based on these negotiations, talks are being held between Indian embassy officials in Kuwait and Kuwait & Gulf Link Transport Company which had hired the seven.

The militant group has said it wants all foreigners working for the US-led coalition in Iraq to leave. At the least, this would imply a commitment from the Kuwait company to cease operations in Iraq. The abductors have threatened to behead one hostage every three days unless the Kuwaiti firm pulls out.

As the talks in Kuwait stretched late into the night, sources said if there is no last-minute hitch, the transport firm is likely to announce tomorrow that it



BACKS TO THE WALL

Tilak Raj
The 40-year-old truck driver hails from Una in Himachal Pradesh. Has three children

Antaryami
Aged 33, the truck driver hails from Una in Himachal. Has an 11-month-old daughter

Sukhdev Singh
The truck driver belongs to Ropar in Punjab. The 28-year-old is a bachelor

The seven truck drivers being held hostage at an undisclosed location in Iraq. These are from left to right: Tilak Raj, Antaryami, Sukhdev Singh, and three others whose names are not disclosed.

would pull out of Iraq. A company official said it would do anything — "whatever that takes" — to save the hostages.

"We are being held here against our will because they feel we are supporting America," Tilak Raj, one of the three Indians abducted yesterday, said on the videotape filmed by their masked abductors. "They have also taken away our vehicles," added the grey-haired man in a light brown shirt.

"We are being given food and

But statements coming from Islamabad, though made with good intent, are unlikely to be taken kindly by the Black Banner group, officials said.

In the Pakistan capital for a Saarc conference, external affairs minister K. Natwar Singh said he had sought his Iraqi counterpart Hoshiyar Zebari's help in getting the Indians freed.

"These people had nothing to do with combat or military operations," Singh said. "This is a humanitarian problem."

Singh also made an appeal on Al Jazeera, which has wide reach in the Gulf, saying Indians are "not combatants" but "innocent people of a friendly country".

He ruled out any drastic change in Delhi's policy, saying that the question of sending troops to Iraq does not arise.

Reports coming out of Islamabad quoted Indian officials as saying Delhi is also in touch with the US embassy in Baghdad.

Both the request for help from Zebari, seen by Iraqi insurgents

its as part of a "puppet" regime, and the public admission of being in touch with the Americans will be interpreted as unfriendly acts by Black Banner. That would make the task of getting the hostages home more difficult.

Lined up with six other hostages in a dark room, Egyptian Mohammed Ali Sanad said on the tape: "We want to go home. It was wrong to come to Kuwait and wrong to help the Americans... I swear it's wrong."

■ Iraq hostage crisis, Page 6

Money bigger than militants

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, July 22: About four weeks ago, under a great deal of pressure the Indian embassy in Kuwait resumed issuing no-objection certificates to Indian citizens based in that country to go to Iraq on work.

The decision followed a large demonstration by Indians in front of the embassy for permission to visit Iraq on lucrative assignments.

No-objection certificates from the embassy are required for Indians to be able to cross the Kuwait border with Iraq.

Under the previous BJP-led government, external affairs minister Yashwant Sinha had directed the embassy to stop issuing the certificates because Iraq had become too dangerous.

The demonstration was of such a scale that police had to be called in to break it up.

Indians with Kuwaiti visas are eager to work in Iraq because of the money. For instance, a worker earning 100 dinars (equivalent to Rs 40,000) a month in Kuwait will get five times the amount in Iraq.

The pay tempts Indians from less than affluent backgrounds to brave the dangers of working in a war-ravaged country.

In May four people from Kerala had returned home to narrate their horrifying experience over nine months while working

as kitchen assistants in a US army camp.

They had, however, said they were tricked into going to Iraq.

Official sources in Delhi said the government had warned Indians against going to Iraq, a directive that has obviously not been followed because the pay was too attractive.

It is believed that there was pressure from lobbies within the country with commercial interests in the Gulf region — the recruitment business fetches big money — to resume issuing no-objection certificates. For example, Faisal, one of the four

Delhi Helpline

8 am-8 pm: (011)23013036

8 pm-8 am: (011)23011954

Malayalees who worked in the US army camp, had said he paid Rs 70,000 to a recruitment agent.

The minister of state for external affairs, E. Ahmad, who is from Kerala from where large numbers go to the Gulf to work, expressed the government's concern about the safety of the three hostages in Iraq.

"We are taking all possible steps to secure an early release of the hostages," he said.

Ahmad announced that a 24-hour control room had been set up in the ministry to respond to queries or to provide information to.

Natwar plea on Arab TV

They think we were helping Americans, says hostage

Saurabh Shukla
and Agencies

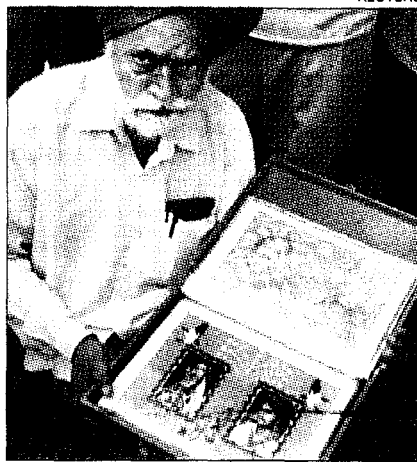
Islamabad/New Delhi, July 22

ONE OF the three Indians kidnapped in Iraq appeared in a video made available to media today and said the hostages were being treated well.

"We are being given food and water and we are sitting comfortably," said Tilak Raj, kidnapped yesterday with six other truck drivers, including three Egyptians and a Kenyan.

Raj and another Indian, Antaryami, are from Una (Himachal Pradesh) while the third, Sukhdev Singh, is from Punjab. The kidnapers, who call themselves "The holders of the Black Banners", have threatened to behead one hostage every 72 hours if their Kuwaiti employer does not withdraw from Iraq by 8 pm (IST) on Saturday.

In the video, Raj said the drivers had been held hostage because their kidnapers think they were helping the Americans in Iraq. "Hamare ko pakad ke rakha



Ram Moorti shows wedding photographs of his son Antaryami, a hostage.

hai ki hum America ka saath de rahen hain. Hamari gaadiyan bhi chheen lee hain (we have been held hostages because they think we are helping Ameri-

cans. They have seized our vehicles as well)," he said.

External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh has appealed on several Arab TV channels, including al-Jazeera, for the release of the three Indians, saying they are "non-combatants and innocent people".

"I appeal to all those who have influence to assist and ensure the safe return home of the innocent persons," Singh said. He told reporters in Islamabad, "The Indian government is in touch with authorities of Iraq and Kuwait besides embassies of the US and Kuwait in New Delhi over the development."

In the evening, Natwar spoke to his Iraqi counterpart Hoshyar Zebari in Cairo who assured him all help. Efforts will be made to try and open channels of communication with the kidnapers.

Singh was asked whether India will advise its nationals in Iraq to return. "No, we have not reached such a stage," the minister replied.

Related reports on Page 3

Continuity in foreign policy

By K.K. Katyal

There are various ways of looking at the recent discussions in New Delhi of the two visiting dignitaries — the German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, and the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, but one point was striking — observance by the Indian side of the foreign policy parameters, set by the Common Minimum Programme. This was done without sacrificing the continuity — on the contrary, by enriching it.

True, the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, had met the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, and the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, during his journey to Washington for the Reagan funeral, but this was his first substantive interaction with the Western leaders. From all accounts, it achieved the three objectives, enunciation of the new government's policies, stress on the bilateral ties and expression of India's core concerns.

Let us recall the CMP's formulation on ties with Washington and Europe (and Russia): "Even as it pursues closer engagement with the U.S.A., the UPA government will maintain the independence of India's foreign policy position on all regional and global issues. The UPA is committed to deepening ties with Russia and Europe as well". When there was a reference to the resolve to "pursue an independent foreign policy," seeking to "promote multi-polarity in world relations and oppose all attempts at unilateralism."

To take the discussions with Mr. Armitage first, the re-assurances by the two sides served to dispel doubts and misperceptions about the course of bilateral relations. The Indian side took note of the new government's commitment to the "Next Step Strategic Partnership" (U.S.S.P), decided upon in January by the U.S. President, George W. Bush, and the then Prime Minister,

A.B. Vajpayee. Though there was no uncertainty about it, an explicit re-statement was needed in view of the change of guard in New Delhi. On its part, the U.S. side said it regarded India an important partner and that mutual relations would continue to be on a sound footing, irrespective of the political complexion of the government in New Delhi. The government and the Opposition, it was noted, were agreed on the importance of ties with Washington. The U.S. was greatly impressed by the functioning of the democratic processes in India.

NEWS ANALYSIS

On the delicate issues, arising out of the current situation in Iraq (and Afghanistan), the perceptions differed, as was known. But what was not public knowledge was the respective viewpoints were expressed without causing any misunderstanding. Mr. Singh suggested that Iran be brought on board in the efforts for restoration of normality in Iraq and total transfer of sovereignty. He, thus, demonstrated, "independence of India's foreign policy position on all regional and global issues." Also, India wanted itself and Iran to be associated with the political and diplomatic moves on Afghanistan. New Delhi would not like any postponement of the elections, scheduled for September, despite the problems facing the Kabul regime. Sensing India's sensitivities against the stationing of its troops in Iraq, Mr. Armitage chose not to raise the issue. However, New Delhi, reiterated the decision to take part in the reconstruction activities in Iraq (for which a sum of \$20 million was to be given through bilateral channels and \$10 million as part of the multi-lateral efforts).

India-Pakistan affairs, too,

figured at some length. Two years ago, Mr. Armitage had conveyed to New Delhi the Pakistan supremo, Pervez Musharraf's assurance to put an end to India-specific terrorist activities "completely." This was taken as a promise to completely dismantle the terrorist infrastructure in the areas under Pakistan's control. It was, natural, for the Indian side to draw the U.S. official's attention to the fact that Islamabad had not fulfilled its assurance. Mr. Armitage agreed and promised to take up the matter with Gen. Musharraf in Islamabad, his next port of call — which he did. More important, Mr. Armitage stuck to his position (on Pakistan's non-fulfilment of its assurance) in Islamabad. He took note of India's complaint against Pakistan for creating problems in New Delhi's dialogue with the separatists in Jammu and Kashmir. The latest evidence was available last month when the Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, Riaz Khokhar, while in New Delhi for talks with his counterpart, Mr. Shashank, began the stay with a meeting with Hurriyat representatives where he "advised" them to give priority to unity in their ranks over the dialogue with New Delhi. Mr. Armitage must have conveyed this to Gen. Musharraf but whether there is a change in Pakistan's stand is difficult to say. On human rights violations, India remained on the defensive.

An early conclusion of the talks on the transfer of high technology by the U.S. to India was unlikely. There were no differences on the concept but an agreed basis for implementation was yet to be found. The conditions, set by Washington for the end-use certification of the technology, were not acceptable to India. The two sides had exchanged several documents on their positions but an agreed basis was yet to be found.

Mr. Fischer's talks, too, focussed mainly on bilateral ties. It

was proposed to update the 2000 declaration, setting forth the agenda for 21st century partnership during the visit here of the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, in October. Apart from the political content, the visit will have a strong economic dimension, with Mr. Schroeder planning to bring with him a group of leading industrialists.

The visiting minister flung two pleasant surprises. One, he wanted India to be involved in the activities of G-8, the group of industrialised countries. This, obviously, was an endorsement for the plea by Italy for the inclusion of India, China and Brazil in the grouping. Two, he regarded India and Germany as the "natural candidates" for permanent seats in a reformed U.N. Security Council. This was a significant observation, implying as it did the resolve to support each other and pool their resources to press their claims. India is a "bright star" and Germany will like to have close relations with it, said Mr. Fischer.

Both India and Germany noted their decision not to send troops to Iraq, with Mr. Schroeder speaking approvingly of the move for U.N.'s central role there. The exchange of views on the developments in their respective regions, was marked by identical approaches.

Some five years ago, Germany used to follow the U.S. lead on its India policy. Germany, like other major countries, reacted sharply to India's nuclear tests in 1998, and imposed sanctions. The following year, it chose to relax the restrictions. During an interview with him in Berlin then, I enquired as to what had weighed with Germany in deciding on the relaxation. "We followed the U.S. lead," he replied. Now, however, Germany takes the initiatives in forging new ties with India, rather than following the other's example. A major change indeed.

J. P. Mishra

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A foreign policy for the East

By C. Raja Mohan

Political pressure from Kolkata and some creative thinking in New Delhi can transform Siliguri and Kalimpong in north Bengal into hubs of trade and travel between India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and China.

IT IS not often that foreign policy initiatives produce immediate and significant domestic political benefits. As he prepares for his first visit abroad as Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh has a rare opportunity to tie together many elements of India's diplomacy with the economic development of the subcontinent's eastern parts. The two-day visit at the end of the month to Bangkok to attend a summit of South and South East Asian nations allows Dr. Singh not just to deepen the second phase of India's Look East policy but also promote the economic interests of West Bengal and the North East.

Juxtaposing regional interests in India with national diplomacy has long been a taboo. But if foreign policy is ultimately about promoting the interests of the people, there can be no real objection to simultaneously pursuing the national interest and that of a specific region.

That the improvement of ties with neighbouring countries has a direct economic and political impact on the bordering regions within the country is a hard reality few leaders can afford to ignore. The normalisation of relations with Pakistan, for example, would open the doors for greater commerce and people-to-people contact between the divided States of Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. Trade with Pakistan would facilitate a more intensive engagement between Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra on the Indian side and the Sindh province across the border.

The economic fate and the political dynamics of the Himalayan Kingdoms of Nepal and Bhutan have always been intimately tied to the bordering Indian States in the Gangetic plain. The improved relations between New Delhi and Beijing have created the opportunity for greater interaction between Sikkim and Tibet. The transformation of the relations between New Delhi and Colombo in recent years has been explicitly premised on the potential benefits from economic integration between Sri Lanka and south India.

That geography is destiny is an accepted axiom in thinking about national security strategy. In large countries such as India, the United States, China and Russia, the execution of foreign policy is inevitably influenced by regional considerations within the nation. Regional parties in India have always tried to influence the contours of foreign policy to the adjoining countries.

This has become more pronounced in the context of the grow-

ing weight of economic diplomacy in Indian foreign policy, the emergence of regional free trade arrangements, and the prospects for greater travel and tourism across the borders in our region. The Punjab Chief Minister has been pressing for a direct bus service between Lahore and Amritsar. The leaders of Jammu and Kashmir want the reopening of transportation routes across the Line of Control and the international border in the divided State. In Rajasthan there is a clamour for reviving the rail link with Sindh. And in Tamil Nadu there is a debate on the merits of a bridge between India and Sri Lanka.

Dr. Singh's visit to Bangkok will help develop the traditional interests of India's foreign policy — deepening the second phase of India's Look East policy and the creation of new options on regional free trade. But it also gives the Prime Minister a huge opportunity to promote the long-neglected interests of the eastern parts of India in the management of India's foreign policy. In its preoccupation with Pakistan, New Delhi rarely has the time and energy to address both the strategic challenges and opportunities to the east. In correcting this imbalance, Dr. Singh can use his visit to Bangkok to put his own stamp on the conduct of India's economic diplomacy. As a Member of Parliament representing Assam, Dr. Singh also has a special responsibility in creating opportunities for the rapid development of the North East.

Dr. Singh will be in Bangkok to attend the first summit of an organisation somewhat inelegantly called BIMSTEC — Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation. The acronym no longer represents the full membership of the organisation, launched at Thailand's initiative a few years ago. Nepal and Bhutan have joined this organisation and along with the others signed the free trade arrangements launched earlier this year. A more appropriate name for the organisation would capture its essence as the Bay of Bengal community.

As free trade arrangements go, the agreement announced by the BIMSTEC earlier this year has some way to go. But its geo-political signifi-

cance cannot be underestimated. It allows India to break out of the constricting confines of the subcontinent that it had long chafed at. In linking five South East Asian countries with two South East Asian nations, it shatters the old notions of a South Asia separated from its eastern neighbours.

The Bay of Bengal community also creates options other than the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in pursuing India's interests in regional economic integration. This does not necessarily mean that BIMSTEC stands in opposition to SAARC. In fact, the Bay of Bengal Community could complement the efforts at SAARC to promote a free trade area in South Asia. The BIMSTEC could also act as a spur to SAARC on economic cooperation.

The BIMSTEC process marks a new phase in India's Look East policy. The Congress Government led by P.V. Narasimha Rao launched this initiative towards South East Asia in the early 1990s. Atal Bihari Vajpayee deepened the scope and substance of India's Look East policy to cover much of Asia, including the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), China, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. The first phase of the Look East policy focussed on developing commercial relations and institutional links with Asia. In the second phase of the Look East policy, India is aiming at political partnerships, physical connectivity through road and rail links, free trade arrangements, and defence cooperation.

While Dr. Singh's trip to Bangkok represents a logical evolution of an Indian foreign policy initiative launched nearly a decade ago, the domestic consequences of the Look East policy have now acquired a new political and economic maturity. India's strategy to develop the remote North East has begun to get a whole range of new options from the successful evolution of the Look East policy. Free trade and physical connectivity in the region will end the "remoteness" of the North East, accelerate economic growth, and create better conditions to address the problems of insurgency in the region.

Where does Kolkata come in?

Imagine the physical area that the BIMSTEC covers — India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand and Sri Lanka. Kolkata sits at the heart of this region. The BIMSTEC is nothing but a re-integration of the markets and hinterlands Kolkata served at the height of its glory. As commercial flows rise from the free trade arrangements agreed with in SAARC and BIMSTEC, the Left Front Government in Kolkata has an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate the development of not just West Bengal but the entire eastern part of the subcontinent.

Kolkata's ambitions need not be limited to SAARC and BIMSTEC. It could even leverage China's dramatic economic growth to the benefit of the Subcontinent. Beijing wants to link its fast growing south-western provinces with India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. New Delhi has been somewhat cool to this so-called Kunming initiative of China. The Left Front Government must now press the Congress-led Government to rethink its approach to the Kunming initiative. It must also demand a change of policy in New Delhi to facilitate transit trade between China and India through Sikkim and north Bengal.

Sikkim has been pressing New Delhi to open up the historic trade routes with Tibet. West Bengal has, however, been relatively quiet. Until now, north Bengal and its Chicken's Neck linking India to its north-east have been seen as a vulnerable choke point. Political pressure from Kolkata and some creative thinking in New Delhi can transform Siliguri and Kalimpong in north Bengal into hubs of trade and travel between India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and China. Kolkata used to be the closest port of exit for Tibet. As Beijing brings a rail line to Lhasa by 2007, the prospect of re-emerging as a valuable outlet to the inner regions of China beckons Kolkata.

The realisation of these objectives demands a rapid upgradation and expansion of connectivity within the eastern part of India, and between it and the neighbouring regions. A commitment to do so could indeed be an important message from the Prime Minister if he chooses to stop over in Assam en route to Bangkok at the end of this month. Kolkata's decline in recent years has been mourned often enough. But its moment has come again with the opportunities arising from the creation of SAFTA, the emergence of the Bay of Bengal community and the economic transformation of China.

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Justice Krishna Pillai

India and the world

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By K.K. Katyal

The conditions in its neighbourhood and in the rest of the world have rarely been more favourable for India to play a larger role.

THANKS TO the congruence of various factors, regional and global, the new United Progressive Alliance Government could feel comfortable in managing external relations. Not that the challenges, posed by the situations in the neighbourhood and elsewhere, are any less daunting now but because the recent developments have served to instil a good measure of confidence in New Delhi. In part, the credit goes to the previous National Democratic Alliance Government — the tendency to de-recognise its deft moves needs to be curbed if only to avoid uncertainty and confusion about the intentions of the new rulers. For a brief while, the UPA Government appeared to adopt a partisan approach but, soon, the futility of this course was realised. The results of its positive stand are already evident.

Two broad generalisations could be made as regards the turn of events that encourage the Indian foreign policy establishment to think of creative, innovative moves. One, relations with Pakistan have shown a marked improvement even though the two sides have yet to address the substantive issues, the cause of tensions and acrimony. Two, the United States received serious blows to its prestige and to the credibility of its actions, thus changing the global context in favour of countries like India, which had felt deterred from playing their role because of the oppressive influence of Washington.

The improvement of the political climate in the subcontinent is certain to help New Delhi get rid of the Pakistan baggage that had acted as a drag whenever it contemplated an initiative either in the region or in international fora. The change in the ties with Pakistan has been dramatic, covering a wide range of subjects and areas. Think of the situation not very long ago when the troops of the two sides were massed on the border in hostile, threatening postures, with the danger of an armed conflict seeming so real. With air, rail and road travel links snapped, with the diplomatic missions rendered headless, following the withdrawal of the High Commissioners from the two capitals and the strength of their staff pruned drastically, the mutual contacts were nominal. The diplomatic staff were mainly used for conveying protests through sharply-worded notes.

All that has been undone now. The highly successful SAARC summit in Islamabad in January held forth the promise of freer trade in the region, not excluding bilateral India-Pakistan dealings, while the meetings on the sidelines of the summit between the top leaders, the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, prepared the framework of contacts for tackling the outstanding issues. That, in one stroke, changed the profile of the subcontinent — it was seen to be on the threshold of a new phase of friendliness and understanding. At the world fora, India was not seen as carrying the heavy Pakistan baggage but got depicted in positive colours. With that changed the quality of its contribution to multilateral discourses.

A bigger and highly positive change — in the world community's perception of India and Pakistan — is certain after the recent dialogue between their nuclear experts, the first of its kind. For years, leading countries in the West described South Asia, Kashmir in particular, as a nuclear flashpoint. They were not prompted by any noble sentiment or by concern over the spread of the weapons of mass destruction, exposing the region to new dangers and instability, but by a desire to foist their agendas. The joint statement issued after the meeting of experts will make it hard for anyone in the world community to talk of nuclear-flashpoint scenarios. The experts were "conscious of the need to promote a stable environment of peace and security between the two countries," recognising "that the nuclear capabilities of each other, which are based on their national security imperatives, constitute a factor for stability." True there is nothing to suggest that the two sides undertook the task of reconciling their nuclear doctrines. Also, nothing is known about another key issue — whether Pakistan had agreed to delink the nuclear confidence building measures from Kashmir. But the significance of the two South Asian powers engaging in a dialogue on nuclear issues is not to under-rated.

New Delhi could also take comfort

from the turn of events in Pakistan. Perhaps, for the first time the anti-India sentiment had weakened as compared to the popular mood against the U.S. Here the improvement, though partial, was by no means insignificant.

In the global context, the implications, of recent developments for India — as indeed, for several other countries — are not to be ignored. The military success of the U.S. invasion of Iraq was followed by dismal political failure. The occupation forces now face the united opposition of the entire populace. The U.S. is desperate to involve the United Nations in Iraq-related measures. However, Washington has not learnt appropriate lessons from its misadventure as evident from the cosmetic measures for the "transfer of sovereignty" to the Iraqi people. The proposed installation of a new Government, comprising the creatures of the occupation forces, has not carried conviction with the Iraqi people and political parties. Washington, it is clear, will continue to be embroiled in the Iraq imbroglio and this pre-occupation, may leave it little or no time for meddling in others' affairs. India, no doubt, will be a beneficiary of this pre-occupation of the U.S.

The moral degradation of Washington — represented, among other factors, by the inhuman, brutal treatment of Iraqi prisoners of war — too, has deprived it of the rationale for interfering in the affairs of others in the name of protection of human rights and concern for good governance and democratic norms. Having violated all canons of decency and civilised behaviour (in the treatment of prisoners of war), Washington is in no position to preach to others or to lecture them on the virtues of the principles it has trampled on. This gives the world community — India included — a respite from the intrusive diplomacy of the kind the U.S. has practised for decades.

In the new context, there will be little difficulty for India to take a firm stand against any suggestion from Washington for the despatch of Indian troops to Iraq. The controversy over the External Affairs Minister,

Natwar Singh's observation after his meeting with the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, achieved a useful purpose, demonstrating as it did the firm resolve of all sections of political opinion against any such action. New Delhi should feel easy in taking an independent stand on other issues that are certain to arise out of the deepening of the Iraqi crisis such as the "transfer of sovereignty" in Baghdad.

As against the blows to U.S. prestige, India's stock rose in the wake of the recent elections. The confirmation of democratic credentials by the world's largest democracy is no ordinary development. The exercise of franchise on such a large scale, leading to a peaceful change of government, conveys a powerful message to the rest of the world, including the developed countries — a message with strong political and diplomatic overtones. This cannot but do India proud, especially in the face of the dismal record in other countries — "advanced" nations not excluded — where democracy has been reduced to a sham exercise or which are controlled either by military dictators or autocratic rulers.

How India makes use of this situation is for the new rulers to decide. The beginning has been good — as evidenced by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh's first address to the nation — the resolve to "actively pursue the composite dialogue with Pakistan," the sincerity about resolving all issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, "commitment to strengthen the "positive developments" relating to China, emphasis on the expansion of economic links with the U.S. and cooperation in new areas such as high technology, "strength and vibrancy of our partnership with Russia", concern over the situations in Iraq and hope for transfer of "full sovereignty" to a "truly representative government" there. Then there is the desire to "actively pursue a cooperative relationship with the European Union to expand the political and economic frontiers of cooperation." The tradition of "an independent foreign policy" is to be maintained and efforts made for "an equitable and multi-polar world order."

This is a broad framework but a sound one. Specific policy decisions will need to be taken in the same spirit with confidence — and with a determination to make the best use of the opportunities in the new favourable environment.

'Ties with Israel won't affect Palestine relations'

NAM needs to undergo change, says Natwar

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UNION External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh today said India "greatly valued" its

relationship with Israel, but this would not affect the rapport New Delhi had with the Palestinians.

In a brief chat with reporters after delivering a lecture on "New Dimensions of Nehruism" here, he said it was during P.V. Narasimha Rao's tenure that India raised its level of representation in Israel.

"Now we have an embassy and an ambassador there. We greatly value our relationship

with Israel. But this will not and should not affect our relations with Palestine," he said.

Earlier, delivering the lecture, Singh said that the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) should undergo a drastic change in view of the changed world order.

According to him, NAM required reinventing and one should not mix "non-alignedment" with the Non-Aligned Movement. "World War I and

It were testimony to the failure of the European diplomacy, and the longing for an alternative voice was fulfilled by Nehru," he said.

Emphasising the all-time relevance of Nehruvian thoughts, Singh said Nehru gave India an independent foreign policy which was not dictated to any dogma or doctrine. Our policy had the flexibility to deal with problems as and when they arose. And

there is a renewed interest in Nehruism now, he added.

He said Nehruism was still relevant as there were certain ideals, policies and outlook which were timeless though the agendas had changed. Nehru's greatness was in his work, writings, philosophy and idealism which helped to change the mindset of millions of people in a positive and uplifting manner, he said.

While stressing on the

UPA Government's commitment to build a closer association with the US, Singh said the coalition forces' action on Iraq had hurt the psyche of Muslims around the world. There should be measures to redress their woes.

The recent UN resolution brought in by the US and the UK, calling for an active role of the UN in Iraq's reconstruction was a welcome step, he said.

J. Francis Perum 9 2 3

ইরাক: সাফ কথা

Journal of Forum

ভারতীয় বিদেশ মন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ লোকসভায় জানাইয়া দিয়াছেন— ইরাকে ভারতীয় ফৌজ প্রেরণের কোনও প্রসঙ্গই ওঠে না, মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের অনুরোধেও না। এতদ্বারা তিনি পশ্চিম এশিয়ার একটি রাজনৈতিক সংকটে ভারতের সম্ভাব্য ভূমিকা লইয়া বিতর্কের উপর যবনিকা টানিয়া দিয়াছেন। বিতর্কটি অংশত তিনি নিজেই সৃষ্টি করিয়াছিলেন, অংশত আগে হইতেই বিদ্যমান ছিল। ব্রিটেন ও মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের ইরাক আগ্রাসনকে ভারত সমর্থন করিবে কি না, সাদ্দাম হুসেন শাসিত ইরাককে বিশ্বশান্তির পক্ষে বিপজ্জনক বলিয়া নয়াদিল্লি মনে করে কি না, এই অস্পষ্টতা দূর হইতেই অনেক কাল কাটিয়া গিয়াছিল। শেষ পর্যন্ত সংসদে সর্বদলীয় প্রস্তাব গ্রহণ করিয়া রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের তদারকিতেই কেবল ইরাকে সৈন্য প্রেরণের সম্ভাবনা শিরোধার্য করিয়া বাজপেয়ী সরকার কার্যত কংগ্রেস ও বামপন্থীদের চাপের কাছে নতিস্বীকারই করিয়াছিল। তাহার পর অবশ্য শাত-এল-আরব এবং গঙ্গা-যমুনা দিয়া অনেক জল বহিয়া গিয়াছে। গণধ্বংসের অস্ত্র ইরাকের কোথাও খুঁজিয়া না পাওয়ায় এবং ১১ সেপ্টেম্বরের সন্ত্রাসবাদী হামলা কিংবা আল-কায়দার সহিত সাদ্দাম বা ইরাকের কোনও সম্পর্ক প্রতিষ্ঠা করিতে না পারায় ইরাক আগ্রাসনের যাবতীয় ইঙ্গ-মার্কিন অপযুক্তিই ধিকৃত হইয়াছে। এখন মার্কিন অভিযানের সমর্থক এবং অভিযানে শরিক হওয়া দেশগুলিও তাহাদের বাহিনী ইরাক হইতে প্রত্যাহার করার তোড়জোড় করিতেছে বা করিয়াছে। এই অবস্থায় ভারতের পক্ষে ইরাকে কোণঠাসা মার্কিন বাহিনীর মদতে নূতন করিয়া সেনা পাঠানোর প্রসঙ্গই ওঠে না। তবু তাহা উঠিয়াছিল নূতন বিদেশমন্ত্রীরই একটি মন্তব্যের কারণে।

ইরাকের সার্বভৌমত্ব প্রতাপণ বিষয়ে মার্কিন প্রস্তাব নিরাপত্তা পরিষদে গৃহীত হওয়ার পর মার্কিন বিদেশ সচিব কলিন পাওয়েলের সহিত বৈঠক শেষে নটবর সিংহ ইরাকের পরিস্থিতির গুণগত পরিবর্তনের দোহাই পাড়িয়া ভারতীয় সৈন্য প্রেরণের প্রস্তাব 'পুনর্বিবেচনা'র কথা বলেন। এই মন্তব্যে শোরগোল পড়িয়া যায়। বেশি কথা বলা যে বিদেশমন্ত্রীরকে মানায় না, প্রতিটি বাক্য যে মাপিয়া, ওজন করিয়া উচ্চারণ করা উচিত, নটবর সিংহ হয়তো তাহা বিস্মৃত হইয়াছিলেন। আজ যেন কতকটা সেই

প্রগল্ভতার প্রায়শ্চিত্ত করিতেই তিনি সংসদে তাহার আগের বক্তব্য নিজেই খণ্ডন করিয়াছেন। ঠিকই করিয়াছেন। তাহা করিতে গিয়া অবশ্য তিনি কিছুটা আবেগতাড়িতও হন, তাহার গলার স্বর বুজিয়া আসে, চক্ষু অশ্রুসজল হইয়া ওঠে। এই নাটকীয়তা অবাঞ্ছিতই ছিল। আজ তো বিশ্বের কেহই বিশ্বাস করে না যে সাদ্দাম হুসেনকে গণধ্বংসের মারণাস্ত্র মজুত করার জন্য ক্ষমতাচ্যুত করা হইয়াছে। ইরাক আগ্রাসনের মূল প্রবক্তা ব্রিটিশ প্রধানমন্ত্রীও স্বীকার করিতেছেন, এ ধরনের মারণাস্ত্র তৈরি বা মজুতের কোনও প্রমাণ মেলে নাই, ভবিষ্যতেও মিলিবে কি না সন্দেহ। মার্কিন তদন্তেও ইরাক বা সাদ্দামকে কোনও ভাবেই সন্ত্রাসবাদের সহিত জড়ানো সম্ভব হয় নাই। তাই আফগানিস্তান আগ্রাসনের বেলায় ওসামা বিন লাদেনের আশ্রয়দাত তালিবান শাসকদের গদিচ্যুত করার ঠে অজুহাত ছিল, ইরাকের ক্ষেত্রে ঠে রকম কোনও অজুহাতও আর গ্রাহ নয়। এই আগ্রাসনে ভারতের যুৎ হওয়ার বা আক্রমণকারীদের তরফে কাজ করার প্রসঙ্গ স্বভাবতই ওঠে না। নটবর সিংহ দ্ব্যর্থহীন ভাষায় তাহা ব্যক্ত করিয়া ভালই করিয়াছেন।

প্রসঙ্গত তিনি আবু ব্রাইব কারাগারে ইরাকি বন্দিদের সহিত মার্কিন রক্ষীদের বর্বরতার নিন্দাও লোকসভায় দাঁড়াইয়াই করিয়াছেন, যাহাও অত্যাবশ্যক ছিল। যে ঘটনায় ইঙ্গ-মার্কিন সভ্যতাভিমান ভুলুপ্তিত এবং সারা বিশ্বের সংবেদনশীলতা মর্মান্বিত হইয়াছে, সে সম্পর্কে ভারতের কোনও সরকারি প্রতিক্রিয়া অব্যক্ত থাকটা নিশ্চয় তাহার গণতান্ত্রিক আদর্শকে মহিমাম্বিত করে নাই। নিন্দা জরুরি ছিল। একই সঙ্গে ইরাক সম্পর্কে ভারতের নীতি নির্ধারণ করিতে গিয়া ইসলামি রাষ্ট্রগুলির আবেগের কথা স্মরণে রাখার প্রস্তাবও তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ। বস্তুত, পশ্চিম এশিয়ায় ভারতের বিদেশ নীতি ধারাবাহিক ভাবেই এই বিষয়টি মাথায় রাখিয়াছে। ইজরায়েলের সহিত সুসম্পর্ক স্থাপনের সময়েও রাজীব গান্ধী আমেরিকা কর্তৃক অবরুদ্ধ ইরাক সফরে গিয়াছেন। বাজপেয়ী সরকারের আমলে ইসলামি দেশগুলির প্রতি পক্ষপাত অগ্রাধিকার পায় নাই, মনমোহন সিংহের সরকার যে সেই অগ্রাধিকারে পরিবর্তন সূচিত করিতেছেন, নটবর সিংহের উক্তি তাহা প্রতিফলিত। তবে সতর্ক থাকিতে হইবে, দিক পরিবর্তন লইয়া অনাবশ্যক বাক্যব্যয় না করাই বিচক্ষণের কাজ।

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No troops for Iraq: Natwar

of former Prime

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 6. The External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, today emphasised in the Lok Sabha that the question of sending Indian troops to Iraq did not arise and that the United Progressive Alliance Government was being guided by the unanimous resolution adopted by Parliament last year.

"We took into account a number of relevant factors such as ground realities, development of political process, role of the United Nations, public perception in Iraq and of Iraq's neighbours, national sentiment in India and capacity to spare our troops for Iraq. Accordingly, we have decided not to consider any troop deployment in Iraq. This will continue. I must clarify that India has not been approached recently for dispatch of troops," Mr. Singh said replying to a discussion in the House on the situation in Iraq, initiated by P.K. Vasudevan Nair of the Communist Party of India.

While the Opposition stayed away from participation in the day's proceedings, members belonging to the Left parties, the Janata Dal (Secular), the National Conference, the Bahujan Samaj Party and the MIM made critical references to the violation of human rights by U.S.-led forces in Iraq, the contours of "economic future" (articulated by Union Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar during his intervention) and foreign policy in post-Soviet Union era, stand on

trial of Saddam Hussein as also Mr. Singh's statement during his visit to Washington last month on "changed situation".

In an emotional submission, Mr. Singh said any compromise was "inconceivable" and he was distressed to note the reaction back home.

The Minister said he had called up the Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, from Washington to clear the air and that he was aware of being a Minister in a coalition Government with responsibility to take all allies, both Houses of Parliament and the nation along while pursuing an independent foreign policy, whose framework was set by Jawaharlal Nehru. "I am sitting on a chair Jawaharlal Nehru sat," he said.

The Minister also read out a sequence of events during 2003 including a request by the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, asking India to spare a division strength troops for Iraq, based on which the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, had asked the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, to obtain views of all parties. "All of us can take credit for the move" that eventually led to India's refusal to spare troops then.

Having come under attack for describing that the situation had changed, Mr. Singh said it was in the context of the United States having agreed to a U.N. Security Council resolution. He said two years ago the U.N. was

ignored and after having adopted a unilateral route, the U.S. had returned to the multi-lateral forum.

"Within the framework of this Resolution, we always emphasised the need for an early restoration of sovereignty to the Iraqi people, the right of Iraqi people to determine freely their political future and control their natural resources and a vital role for the U.N. in the transitional process and political and economic reconstruction of the country. It is in this spirit that we welcomed the Security Council's Resolution 1546 as a first step towards transfer of authority to the Iraqi people."

Mr. Singh said India stood committed to assisting the people of Iraq in their humanitarian and reconstruction efforts and that the country had committed U.S. \$ 20 million assistance; took steps like a training course in India for Iraqi diplomats, for Iraqi officials in information technology, plan to train Iraqi Oil Ministry officials in upstream / downstream units and rehabilitating a hospital among others.

Earlier initiating the debate, Mr. Nair charged that the U.S. had foisted a "puppet regime" under a person who was associated with the Central Intelligence Agency. He likened the torture of Iraqi prisoners in the Abu Gharib jail with the Hitler's gas chambers.

He warned the dangers of a new order with the U.S. trying to evolve a unipolar world.

7 JUL 2004

India's Afghan policy

By M.K. Bhadrakumar

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister Natwar Singh picked out Afghanistan for one of his first detailed briefings by officials after assuming office. Indian policy towards Afghanistan, pursued by successive Congress governments till 1995, had placed emphasis on the historical and cultural ties with the two peoples. The primacy for people-to-people relations stemmed from close fraternal feelings towards Pashtuns who were participants in India's freedom struggle.

Secondly, India stuck to a line of non-interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs. Thus, following *Mujahideen* takeover in Kabul in 1991, when individual groups gearing up for the looming intra-Afghan strife began to seek Indian patronage, New Delhi firmly discouraged such "feelers". India would not be party to an intra-Afghan strife. Thirdly, India consistently regarded that Afghan people should decide on their form of government by themselves through sustained intra-Afghan dialogue. India held to this line even when Peshawar-based *Mujahideen* groups, rooted in the culture of *ji-had*, grabbed power.

Finally, Indian policy called for an independent, non-aligned and strong Afghanistan that would be free from outside interference.

Since 1995, however, there have been departures in policy. These were initially digressions or marginal deviations. In September 1999, however, the then External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, openly called for a "pro-active" policy towards Afghanistan and underlined that India had vital interests in Afghanistan. When he said the days of India's "supine acceptance" of developments in Afghanistan were over, Mr. Singh

was articulating an altogether new template of policy. Justifying the shift, he had said that India had evidence that Osama bin Laden was involved in the Kargil incursion — evidence "we will reveal at an appropriate time." Admittedly, there has been some degree of course correction in the period since June 2002 when Jaswant Singh left office as External Affairs Minister.

Thus, India has picked up its moribund links with the majority Pashtun community. India's exclusive alliances with hand-picked non-Pashtun groups are giving way to

American forces occupying their country have the watches but the Taliban have the time. This just about sums up the Afghan stalemate. The stalemate has several dimensions. First and foremost, the Afghan war has turned out to be a classic Clausewitzian war — politics by other means. Clearly, much prior to September 11, the U.S. had planned to intervene in Afghanistan.

The BJP-led Government was supportive of such U.S. intervention as far back as 1999-2000 even though India shared little common ground with American regional objectives in

for establishing American military presence in Central Asia, thereby fulfilling a long-term strategic objective. In the event, "war against terrorism" became an exclusive American show in pursuit of U.S. interests. Thus, as Sergei Ivanov, Russia's Defence Minister underlined at the International Security Conference in Munich in February this year, if peace still remains elusive, "it results from the absence of a truly international approach towards the stabilisation of Afghanistan".

The Afghans are a deeply disappointed people after three years of "liberation". Little has changed outside of the cities. The popular perception is that the tenuous stability will collapse once international forces leave.

Jean Arnault, U.N. special envoy to Afghanistan, warned recently, "The security situation has clearly deteriorated in the south, where there is an intensification of Taliban's military campaign". To counter the Taliban challenge, American forces are resorting to search-and-destroy missions and revenge killings that only alienate innocent civilians. Human Rights Watch documented in a 59-page report in March that the American war crimes in Afghanistan are no less inhuman than in Iraq.

There is continuing speculation, meanwhile, that the Americans might at some point cut their losses and seek an "exit strategy". Conceivably, the Taliban cannot be faulted in estimating that time favours it. India has much to ponder over.

(The writer is a former Indian Foreign Service officer with wide experience in Afghanistan and Central Asia.)

India has begun to edge away from its all-embracing diplomatic cooperation with the United States on Afghanistan.

even-handed dealings with all Afghan groups cutting across ethnic, religious, regional divides. Civilian, humanitarian, people-to-people contact has been gaining ascendancy in India's diplomacy. Without doubt, India has begun to edge away from its all-embracing diplomatic cooperation with the United States on Afghanistan that was fostered under Jaswant Singh's watchful eye.

This course correction is being undertaken quietly, but Afghan people seem to take note of it nonetheless. The rhetorical flourishes of current Taliban literature do not any longer contain anti-India tirades. The unconditional release of Indian workers is another example.

What stocktaking can the United Progressive Alliance Government do regarding the Afghan situation? The Afghans are increasingly saying that

Afghanistan. The BJP-led Government overlooked that the Americans had only a limited quarrel with the Taliban — that it should sever links with Osama bin Laden — whereas, India had far more fundamental concerns. The BJP-led Government sidestepped the manifest reality that its offer of support to American intervention notwithstanding, the U.S. had all along preferred Pakistan as its chosen ally in Afghanistan.

State Department cables that have been de-classified recently testify that Washington had the utmost confidence all along that Pervez Musharraf would cooperate with a U.S. intervention in Afghanistan and, most crucially, he would override Islamist domestic opposition.

If September 11 provided the excuse for the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan, war provided the context

Nuclear CBMs, seriously

THE recent minimal South Asian attempt at nuclear confidence building measures (CBMs) is best described by an apt South Asian saying: "Khoda pahad, nikla chuha". For five years, ever since the grand initiative of Lahore collapsed in the misadventure of Kargil, security experts from both countries met frequently, to continue from where Lahore ended. Initiatives ran simultaneously. Some petered out, while others built on each conference, to explore the deeper reaches of nuclear CBMs.

Many in Pakistan and India will recollect how the first beginnings on nuclear CBMs in 1999 grew to the formidably complex exchanges that currently take place. Both sides were aware that here was an issue which bound the two countries in mutual self interest, that the dangers of accidental nuclear war or the march towards deliberate nuclear use through misperception, needed strong CBMs. At the same time, both sides were clear that whatever national compulsions inspired Delhi and Islamabad to make nuclear weapons, were better left unchallenged. Safety had to be achieved within the framework of what each side held non-negotiable. Naturally these discussions occurred in the ambit of what is called Track II.

However, since most participants from either side consisted of recently retired foreign secretaries, generals, admirals and diplomats, the meetings had a certain gravitas. The Pakistani side frequently involved serving people, particularly from the Pakistani policy and plans making body — Strategic Plans Division. The Indian MEA studiously kept out of Track II and slowly but deliberately painted themselves into a corner — of ignorance and/or arrogance. After five years during which Track II dealings reached extremely sophisticated levels,



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Appoint a full-time negotiating team. For MEA, only a supporting role

|| RAJA MENON

the Pakistani Track I people were fully in the picture. The Indian Track II participants hoped that when the time came for formal negotiations they could bring the Indian MEA up to scratch.

These expectations did not take some factors into account — the arrogance of the Indian Foreign Service and the ineptitude with which they prepared for a crucial talk with Pakistan, on a subject in which their expertise is so minimal. Comprehensive handouts were sent to the MEA whenever a particularly useful Track II meeting took place. These were never acknowledged, often from a number of Indian

mat's former bosses. The foreign secretary's hotline is an absurdity. A service needs a control room, equipped and manned 24 hours a day by officers (and not a duty clerk) before a hotline is put into it. Military operations are conducted from the DGMO's control room. Let the foreign service learn how to run a control before they need a hotline.

Simple people can always be fooled if national dailies report trivialities in bold print on the front page. They assume that something important must be going on in Delhi. To experts, the Indo-Pak CBM talks are an embarrassment, and it will be diffi-

The Indo-Pak CBM talks are an embarrassment. It will be difficult to avoid being patronised in London and Washington

sources, despite the fact that the same document was circulating in Islamabad too. Offers of interactions between any number of eminent Indian thinkers and the Indian MEA were either put off or coldly turned down. The result is there for all to see. A subject of so much mutual benefit to both countries has produced an agreement which could have been arrived at over the telephone. This is trivialising with a vengeance. A senior diplomat has confirmed that the MEA isolated themselves not in a fit of absent mindedness, but deliberately, so that they would not be infected by the Indian Track II movement which they suspected were run by a "foreign hand". This, in spite of most participants being the diplo-

cult to avoid being patronised in London and Washington, merely because the MEA combined arrogance with ineptitude. It is common knowledge in Delhi that there are only two individuals in the Indian Foreign Service who can be fielded by the country at international conferences on arms control. This is plainly ridiculous. Even sillier is the idea that an additional secretary or joint secretary can negotiate national security issues on behalf of his country. "Negotiate" means to bargain, to mediate, to compromise, to arbitrate and to make concessions. The task of satisfying public opinion in one's own country is often more difficult than convincing the opposition of the merits of an argu-

ment. How can an additional secretary do all this?

When the Americans fielded their first team for talks with the Soviets they nominated three retired ambassadors, one strategist, one representative from the pentagon and one from the department of energy. All of them, literally all, were national figures. The main actors in this team remained on the negotiating team for the next 20 years. They were backed by a team of about twenty people from all disciplines to do the calculations overnight and to suggest options. Can the Indian MEA do something similar? Not if present attitudes remain. Innumerable thinkers and writers have pointed out that the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty I (SALT I) took two years to negotiate, Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) took a similar period and Mutual Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) which became Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) took 15 years. But like the Bourbons, the MEA learns nothing. These Indo Pak talks which finished at 1300 hrs on the second day were like a friendly South Asian tennis match.

The time has come for the national security adviser to appoint a full time Indian negotiating team, which has no other responsibility, to replace the MEA functionaries, who will then be reduced solely to a supporting role. There was a period in the eighties and nineties when Indian diplomats were caught short on expertise on economic issues. Much damage was done before corrective action was taken. This phenomena is now being repeated in national security. It is one thing when India and Pakistan cannot resolve disputes owing to their complexity. It is something else when negotiations produce frivolous results because of lack of preparation and not accessing the intellectual resources of the country.

NATWAR'S GAFFES

✓ 5/26 25/6
Poor Showing In First Month In Office

By SWAGATO GANGULY

The much-vaunted experience that K Natwar Singh is supposed to bring to foreign affairs isn't evident yet, with a series of diplomatic gaffes and blunders within a month of his appointment as external affairs minister. His statements have led to considerable bemusement in foreign capitals; neither do they appear very well coordinated with Delhi, leading to humiliating retractions forced on him later. The impression being created is one of Delhi not knowing its own mind.

Perhaps Natwar Singh is feeling skittish as he settles into his job. But he brings to it a great deal of Cold War baggage, which manifests itself in unpredictable ways. As of now, he gives no sign of having settled his priorities. If he continues in this vein there is a case to replace him, as vital security interests are at stake.

About turn

Take the statements he made on India-Pakistan relations immediately after assuming office. He asked that the Simla accord — signed more than 30 years ago by erstwhile mentor India Gandhi with a defeated Zulfikar Ali Bhutto — be the bedrock on which negotiations should proceed. That appears to negate recent positive developments in India-Pakistan ties, most notably the accord signed in Islamabad on January 5, 2004, which lays down a format for talks. This is overly belligerent, and General Musharraf phoned Vajpayee in alarm, to ascertain whether agreements arrived at on the peace process were off. The statement looks as if it was guided by petty considerations — to deny credit to the previous NDA government for improving ties with Pakistan. Foreign policy ought to be more important than party-political considerations.

If Singh's move was churlish and not thought through, the MEA turned tail and made an abrupt about-turn soon afterwards. Natwar Singh phoned his opposite number in Islamabad, Mehmood Kasuri, while his office issued a statement saying that the new government had faith in the Islamabad Declaration. Next, he delinked talks from cross-border terrorism, saying the dialogue cannot be derailed by acts of terror.

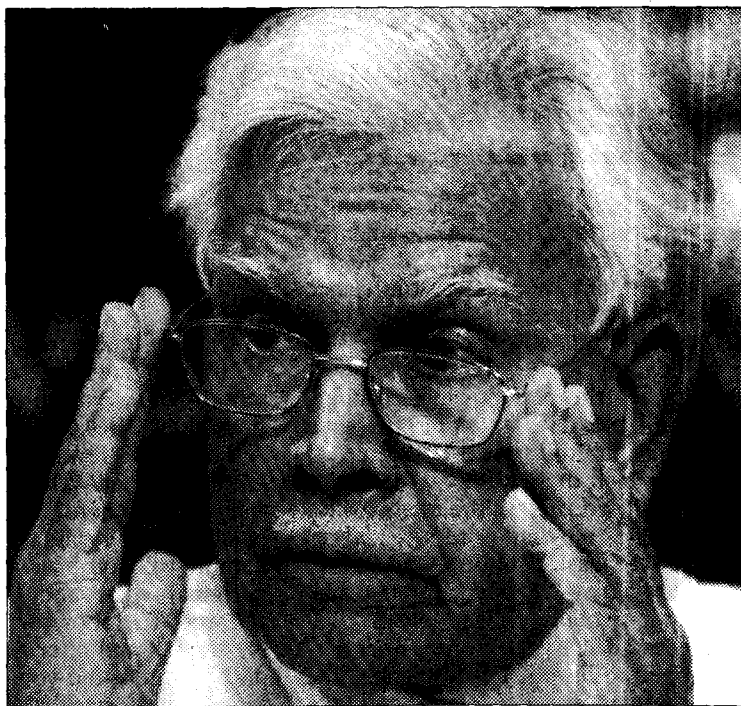
This shows up Singh's negotia-

The author is Assistant Editor, The Statesman

ting skills in poor light, as he whittles down Delhi's bargaining chips should Islamabad resume its proxy war. Delhi won international recognition of its case that a terror war was conducted against it by insisting that it would not talk in the face of cross-border terrorism, and mounting a diplomatic campaign which suggested that it would not restrain itself from hitting

ago if it had wanted to. But the threat of first use is an integral part of Islamabad's strategy to deter a conventional attack by Indian forces, as it fears it will be overwhelmed in case of a purely conventional war. Nothing has happened to change that calculus, and it is utterly unlikely that Islamabad will change strategy to suit Delhi.

Or does a common doctrine



back against terrorist bases on Pakistani soil. If Islamabad unleashes its *jihadis* again, Delhi cannot suggest that it is serious about the issue if it continues with diplomatic glad-handing, playing cricket, soft borders with unlimited entry for Pakistani citizens, and all the rest of it. There has to be a fall-back plan other than counter-insurgency operations; even if there isn't, Natwar Singh would be wise to conceal rather than broadcast the fact, as it gives away to Islamabad that it faces little risk should it choose to escalate conflict over Kashmir.

Common nuclear doctrine

Another of his dodgy initiatives is the proposal that India, China and Pakistan adopt a common nuclear doctrine. Let it be noted that it has not even been recognised by Beijing officially. What would such a doctrine look like in practice? Would it mean, for instance, that Islamabad declare a no first use policy like Delhi's? That, of course, has been a long-standing Indian demand, and Islamabad would have acceded to it long

mean that Delhi too is contemplating first use? Is Singh sending a coded message that Delhi could dispense with no first use in a situation where, for instance, it fears imminent nuclear attack? If so, it would be even more destabilising than the present situation. There is also the small matter that a government that signals it will continue business as usual in case Islamabad re-launches the proxy war is hardly credible when it announces it is contemplating first use of nuclear weapons. Singh's ideas on the subject are, to say the least, enigmatic rather than coherent.

No less enigmatic is Singh butting into an exchange between Colin Powell and an American reporter to state that with the "changed situation" in the light of the new UN resolutions on Iraq, Delhi would reconsider its decision not to send troops to that country. Singh may love the UN — Indian diplomats are taught to revere anything emanating from that august assembly — but the point to note is that Iraqi guerrillas are not Indian diplomats, and may not

quite see it that way. Iraq has suffered heavily under UN sanctions, and the corruption of UN officials in the oil-for-food deal with the previous government of Saddam Hussein is common knowledge in that country. Indian troops, who have a hard enough time in Kashmir, would become targets in an Iraqi insurgency as well, not to mention that terror attacks against domestic targets in India would loom large on the Al Qaeda screen. Since the Iraq invasion the Al Qaeda has become a fattened beast, as the latest US state department report on terrorism worldwide has conceded.

Note that it wasn't necessary for Singh to have said anything at all on that occasion, as Powell was sounding off on an entirely different topic. After having shot his bolt Singh's retraction has been utterly surreal — he says now that by "changed situation" he means a domestic issue in US politics, namely, the decision by a Senate Committee to probe the abuse of Abu Ghraib prisoners.

Avoiding isolation

From Indian troops in Iraq to the US Congress investigating Abu Ghraib is a remarkably long shot, and diplomats will not be impressed with such feats of imagination. If Singh does not change tack and project coherent and consistent policy in line with Indian objectives, Delhi stands the risk of its concerns being relegated to the back seat once again in international circles. Self-marginalisation has been a game played by Indian diplomats at least since 1955, when Jawaharlal Nehru passed up an offer of permanent membership in the UN Security Council in favour of China. Beijing took the opportunity and is now the biggest hurdle to Delhi entering this charmed circle.

Word has gone around since then that Delhi doesn't possess the requisite will to power — which is why, despite India being a democracy and an emerging IT power, the EU, the US and Japan look to China as their principal interlocutor in continental Asia. Doors may be opening a crack once again, with the idea of inviting India to join an expanded G-8 being floated. In order to get a foot in the door Delhi needs to put a disciplined, professional and creative face on its diplomacy forthwith, not a cantankerous and impulsive one.

India's "look-west" policy

By C. Raja Mohan

India needs the larger vision of a "look west" policy that avoids the error of seeing Pakistan in mere bilateral terms.

ALITTLE over a decade ago, the Congress Government led by P.V. Narasimha Rao launched one of India's more successful foreign policy initiatives — the "look east" policy. It reconnected India to the booming economies of East and South East Asia. The regime of Atal Bihari Vajpayee expanded this policy by developing physical connectivity to eastern Asia as well as defence and security cooperation with key nations of the region.

Can the Manmohan Singh Government complement India's eastern initiative by launching a badly needed "look west" policy. The Common Minimum Programme of the Congress-led coalition talks about the importance of developing relations with West Asia. But the region is much more than an arena of confrontation between Israel and the Arabs.

The geographical conception of West Asia has significantly expanded since the collapse of the Soviet Union and is now called the "Greater Middle East." It includes the far corners of northern Africa and the now independent republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Much like South East Asia, this region shares a long historical association with India. It is the source for India's ever-expanding needs of energy. It is also a huge market for Indian goods, services, and skilled manpower. And, it is the arena for the unfolding confrontation between the impulse for political modernisation and religious extremism. This tension has naturally overflowed into the Subcontinent destabilising India's own security environment.

While India's engagement with the Greater Middle East has increased in the 1990s, there is as yet no coherent strategy. India has attempted, in a piecemeal manner, to improve relations with the Central Asian states, sought to promote its energy security partnerships in the Gulf and beyond, and reach out to markets there. It has sought to develop a special relationship with Iran and intensify its role in Afghanistan. All these efforts have not added up to much. Nor has India been able to reclaim its pre-independence primacy in the region.

The inability of India to make a strategic breakthrough in the Greater Middle East lies in the unending political rivalry and military tension with Pakistan. The Partition in 1947 removed India's physical access to the region. Pakistan, of course, is more

than a geographic barrier between India and the Greater Middle East. It has effectively neutralised many of India's initiatives through its own special links to the Greater Middle East.

As India unveils yet another effort at comprehensive bilateral engagement with Pakistan, it needs a different strategic perspective about its western neighbour. The essence lies in developing policies that will transform Pakistan from a barrier into a bridge to the west. India and Pakistan as partners in the Greater Middle East? At first cut, this appears an outlandish idea. After all have not India and Pakistan contested each other's influence all over the Greater Middle East? Are not New Delhi and Islamabad deadly rivals in Afghanistan? But the past need not necessarily be a guide to the future.

The Pakistani establishment has always been acutely conscious of its special geopolitical role at the confluence of the Subcontinent, the Persian Gulf and Central Asia. Pakistan leveraged this locational advantage throughout the Cold War and made itself indispensable for the United States and China. India tended to complain but there was little it could do to change the basic geopolitical attributes of Pakistan. The loss of Bangladesh in 1971 made no difference.

A bold "look west" policy from New Delhi would acknowledge the geopolitical significance of Pakistan and turn it on its head. Instead of a perennial obstacle to the Greater Middle East, Pakistan could become a link connecting the Subcontinent to the energy-rich Persian Gulf and Central Asia. Pakistan could become the transit route for the movement of goods, people and energy between India and the Greater Middle East.

But why would Pakistan want to be India's gateway to a region it thinks is part of its own strategic depth and religious identity? There are good reasons to believe Pakistan has begun to move the self-perception of its location from geopolitics to geo-economics. Even more important, a quiet "look east" policy has developed in Pakistan in recent years. Its initial success is reflected in Pakistan's incipient

admission later this month into the security arm of the Association of South East Asian Nations, the ASEAN Regional Forum. If Pakistan is to realise the full potential of this initiative to the east, it too needs to overcome the physical barrier that India is.

The changing perceptions in Pakistan were reflected at a conference on peace and stability in the Subcontinent organised last week in Islamabad by the Institute of Regional Studies. In her keynote address to the conference, Maleeha Lodhi, currently Pakistan's envoy to Great Britain, suggested that New Delhi and Islamabad grant each other transit facilities when bilateral relations improve.

If that idea fructifies, India will gain overland access to Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia; Pakistan in turn will be able to trade along the Indian highways with Nepal, Bangladesh and South East Asia. Today India is going to great lengths to develop access to Afghanistan and Central Asia through Iran. Pakistan similarly has to circumnavigate India to get to the east.

The idea was further developed by the President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, who addressed the concluding session of the IRS Conference. The essence of his argument was that an India-Pakistan rapprochement would unleash the potential for both regional economic integration in the Subcontinent as well as trans-regional cooperation involving South Asia, Central Asia, and the Gulf. Pakistan could become the transit hub of commercial highways and energy pipelines, Gen. Musharraf pointed out.

These ideas were not random thoughts from the President of Pakistan and his envoy to London. The notion that Pakistan could use its location to economic advantage first surfaced at a meeting of Pakistan's Ambassadors in Islamabad last year. The idea of Pakistan as commercial hub also appears to be part of the strategy of Gen. Musharraf to develop Pakistan as an "enlightened and moderate Islamic state."

Pakistan's long-term economic interests coincide with India's "look west policy". Gen. Musharraf, of course, insists that the resolution of

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the Kashmir question is the key to unleashing the geo-economic potential of the region. That attitude need not dampen the immediate prospects of substantive cooperation between India and Pakistan. New Delhi, in any case, has agreed to seriously negotiate the Kashmir question with Islamabad under the present peace process.

More important, Pakistan itself has de-linked the construction of overland pipelines from Iran and Central Asia to India from its emphasis that Kashmir is the core issue. Instead of scepticism about Gen. Musharraf's talk about the prospects for regional economic cooperation, India should take him at face value. It should accept Gen. Musharraf's offer on pipelines and suggest further possibilities.

The construction of pipelines across Pakistan's territory would also make it easy to build highways linking India with Iran and Afghanistan. India could offer to negotiate trade and transit treaties involving all the four countries. India could also propose cooperation with Pakistan in promoting free trade between South Asia and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

An Indian offer to begin early negotiations with Pakistan on the pipeline projects could send a powerful signal about New Delhi's will to enter into strategic cooperation with Islamabad. In any event the success of the current peace process depends on the ability to come up with some creative ideas on resolving the Kashmir question.

Any final settlement of the Kashmir question would inevitably involve innovative political cooperation across the divided state. It would also entail the complete normalisation of India-Pakistan relations and the transformation of the borders. Projects such as natural gas pipelines, interconnected electricity grids, and trans-national highways will unveil the new strategic conception of Pakistan as India's gateway to the west. India, in turn, will be Pakistan's bridge to the east.

As India gets down to negotiations on a variety of subjects in the coming weeks, it will be easy to get lost in petty arguments and technical detail. To make a success of the peace process with Pakistan, India needs the larger vision of a "look west" policy that avoids the error of seeing Pakistan in mere bilateral terms. Until now India and Pakistan have diminished each other in the Greater Middle East. Together they can both improve their standing in this vital region.

More chops & changes in foreign ministry

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, June 16: After finalising the names of India's ambassadors to the US, Britain and Russia, the government is thinking of shuffling some key posts in the foreign ministry, including that of joint secretary in the Prime Minister's Office.

Sujata Mehta, the joint secretary heading the ministry's American division, is likely to replace P.S. Raghavan as joint secretary in the PMO. S. Jaisankar, ambassador to the Czech Republic, will take her place while Raghavan will be sent to Prague.

The names of Ronen Sen, Kamlesh Sharma and Kanwal Sibal have been finalised as envoys to the US, Britain and Russia, respectively. It has also been decided to send high commissioner in Sri Lanka Nirupam Sen to New York as permanent representative in the United Nation and get additional secretary (administration) Nirupama Rao

as his replacement in Colombo.

Another joint secretary, Bhaswati Mukherjee, who heads the Europe West division in the ministry, is scheduled to leave for Paris soon as permanent representative in Unesco. She will replace Neelam Sabharwal who is likely to move to Cyprus to take up the ambassador's post.

Sanjay Singh, the deputy chief of mission in the Indian embassy in Paris, is likely to be Mukherjee's replacement in South Block.

The ambassador's post in Cyprus has been lying vacant for some months since Pawan Varma took over as the head of the Indian Cultural Centre in London.

The government is also keen to get some of the secretaries' posts in South Block filled up before Shyam Saran takes over as the new foreign secretary on August 1.

Indications are that ambassador to Nigeria Atish Sinha may

be asked to return to Delhi to take up one of the five secretary-level posts. Ambassador to Thailand Leela Poonappa has also been asked to come back and become a secretary.

Additional secretary (policy planning) Suryakanti Tripathi is likely to be sent to Bangkok as Poonappa's replacement.

Santosh Kumar, the dean of the Foreign Service Institute — another secretary-level post — will leave for South Africa shortly to take up the high commissioner's post replacing Shiv Mukherjee, who in turn will take Saran's place as ambassador to Nepal.

But it is not clear whether R.M. Abhayankar, secretary in charge of Asia and North Africa, will be able to take up his post as ambassador to Belgium as P.K. Singh, the current envoy, has reportedly asked the government to extend his tenure by a year. Singh has been posted to Spain to replace Dilip Lahiri, who has gone to Paris.

The Iraq track

UPA govt's Left allies must realise foreign policy is about national interest not ideology

UN Resolution 1546, adopted unanimously by the Security Council last week, has been welcomed across the world from Indonesia to several Arab states. At one level it marks the failure of the US experiment in unilateralism while, at another, it hopes to nudge international relations back toward multilateralism. By accepting that the US-led multinational force will serve "at the request of the incoming interim government of Iraq" the resolution has re-established the principle of Iraqi sovereignty after June 30, even though the realities on the ground imply major limits to that sovereignty.

As External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh stated in Washington, India had refused in the past to send troops to Iraq, but the new resolution represents many changes requiring a review. The central responsibility of the UN is likely to be established once more if the new resolution has to be taken toward its intended goals. A clear timetable for Iraqi transition to democratic government has been spelt out with the formation of the sovereign Interim Government of Iraq to be followed by direct elections by December 31, but not later than January 31, 2005, to elect a transitional government to be followed by a constitutionally elected government

by December 31, 2005. A great deal, of course, would depend upon how the expected procedures succeed between now and then. There are many challenges that would need to be addressed before New Delhi can seriously consider making its contribution to assist the Iraqis in Iraq.

But the greatest challenge lies in ensuring that the nuances implicit in Natwar Singh's diplomatic approach to foreign policy issues should not become the victim of ideological fossilisation. The CMP of the Congress-led coalition cannot be the basis of the day-to-day conduct of diplomacy and foreign policy or, for that matter, a vehicle for propagating pet fantasies. In their newly expanded role in national decision making, the UPA's Left allies must understand quickly that for most countries foreign policy is not ideologically driven. It is about the pursuit of national interests. In fact this is just the lesson from the disaster of Bush's Iraq policy where neo-conservative ideology, relying on ideological parameters, was allowed to overtake the objective pursuit of national interests based on realities. It is vital that the issues affecting our Iraq policy now must be objectively understood, discussed and the best way forward adopted in an evolving situation.

BJP attacks Natwar over troops to Iraq

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TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The BJP on Saturday attacked external affairs minister Natwar Singh, for opening up the question of sending troops to Iraq on Friday, an issue the NDA government had carefully treaded upon and finally refused to comply with, when it came up exactly a year ago.



Former external affairs minister and BJP spokesman Yashwant Sinha charged Natwar Singh with making "at least five earthshaking pronouncements on which he has had to retract in the last 20 days".

Sinha said nothing has changed in Iraq since last year, the security situation has deteriorated there and total or partial sovereignty has yet to be restored in the country and coalition forces will take at least more than year to pull out of there. In such a situation Indian troops which have only been sent so far on peace keeping mis-

sions for the UN, would have to fight Iraqi people, and that is unacceptable to India. "The statement was made in Washington, not in India, and by a government committed to following an independent foreign policy," Sinha said, adding that, the opposition had branded the NDA "a government sold to the US."

"We had said our troops would not go. Even though costs were a major consideration since it was for India to bear, we decided that we will not commit Indian troops in a situation where they will receive fire and open fire on the Iraqi people," he said.

Foreign policy issues must be resolved through national consensus

Are you listening?

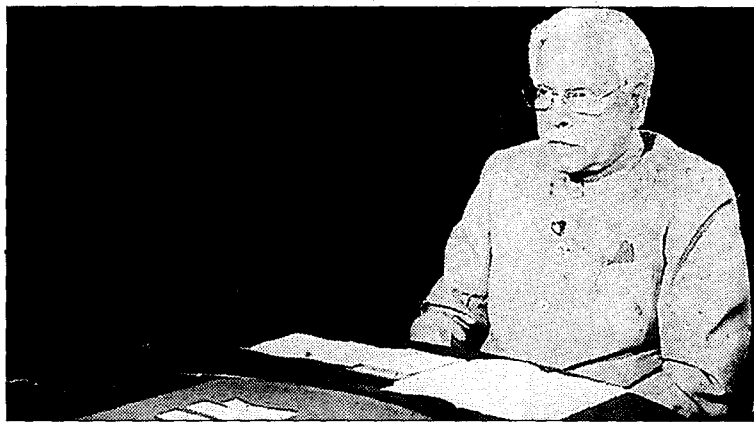
By A.G. NOORANI

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THE UPA government faces daunting challenges on the foreign policy front. The peace process with two neighbours, Pakistan and China, are at a delicate, nascent stage. Iraq and Afghanistan are in a shambles thanks to its 'liberators'. While it is very much in our national interest to have good relations with the US, we must also assert clearly the points on which we differ. There is, besides, the problem of national consensus.

The NDA regime repeatedly claimed unprecedented achievements that turned out to be empty boasts. There was scant respect for national consensus. The Jan Sangh belittled Jawaharlal Nehru. The BJP followed suit. Jaswant Singh's book, *Defending India*, retained (p. 45) the lie that Nehru wanted to "scrap the army", relying on the word of the first Commander-in-Chief, whom Nehru had sacked. Worse, citing Nehru's *Discovery of India*, Jaswant Singh referred (p. 56) to Nehru views expressed by Gandhi ignoring deliberately the differences which Nehru had recorded on the very same page (p. 443). Ignored also was Nehru's memo of February 3, 1947, which said: "We are going to provide for defence by armed forces." Nehru listed his expectations from all their three wings (*Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*; Vol. 2, p. 353). This, despite a handsome grant from the Dorab Tata Trust "for the research costs of this book".

As External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh promised "tectonic shift of consciousness" and carried out such "shifts" in many respects, most notably, when it came to the US. The Jan Sangh had advocated markedly pro-American and pro-Israeli policies. The UPA, therefore, can't be blamed for correcting excesses inspired by ideological biases. The BJP had received full cooperation from the opposition during the months it had pursued its hare-brained Operation Parakram and in the two peace processes. The UPA government must not allow itself to be deflected from its course as Inder Gujral was when Vajpayee attacked the Islamabad Joint Statement of June 23, 1997. It envisaged a mechanism for a composite dialogue on all issues. Had Gujral not reneged on



MAMA MEA, HERE I GO AGAIN: Natwar Singh

the accord by refusing to set up a working group on Kashmir, Pakistan's insistence on discussing the issue first would not have acquired the edge it did. India did not offer Pakistan the Chinese model of a working group. To plead "Let us put Kashmir aside" is to arouse the very fears and suspicions in Islamabad which need to be set to rest if the peace process is to succeed.

The fine print of the Simla agreement (para 6) is instructive: "Both governments agree that their respective heads will meet again at a mutually convenient time in the future and that, in the meanwhile, the representatives of the two sides will meet to discuss further the modalities and arrangements for the establishment of durable peace and normalisation of relations, including the question of repatriation of prisoners of war and civilian internees, a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir and the resumption of diplomatic relations."

Three points deserve note. First, the existence of a Kashmir dispute, which required "a final settlement", was accepted. Second, to this end the heads of government were to "meet again". Third, "in the meanwhile", representatives of both sides were to meet to discuss Kashmir and other issues. They met to discuss only 'other issues' in 1972-73, never Kashmir. The summit envisaged by para 6 was never held. The Simla agreement does not provide a mechanism that works on its own. It is a do-it-yourself kit, with

incomplete instructions and a price tag. Over time its text acquired layers of sub-texts. A decade ago, Mani Shankar Aiyar remarked: "I never understood the logic of using the Simla agreement to put the Kashmir issue on the backburner."

External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh has done well to stress a commitment to "Simla, Lahore plus January 6; total continuity" and also that "nothing that the Vajpayee government has accomplished will be undone; it will be taken further". International accords bind States regardless of changes in government. None of the challenges facing the nation can be resolved except through national consensus. This is true not only of Kashmir and the boundary dispute with China but also of, say, revision of the 1950 Treaty with Nepal or disputes with Bangladesh. The BJP's cooperation must be sought, but it mustn't be allowed to veto initiatives as it did in 1997.

It is certainly not partisanship to repair the damage the NDA implicated for ideological reasons in several areas of foreign policy. For instance, from the Rajiv-Zia accord of Dec. 17, 1985, on talks on Siachen, right till 1998, it was tacitly accepted by both sides that they would disengage from the area. For reasons of his own, not hard to discern, George Fernandes abruptly reversed the policy on July 18, 1998 by declaring "India needs to hold on to Siachen, both for strategic reasons and wider security in the region". Both reasons run counter to experts' opin-

ions. National Security Advisor J.N. Dixit remarked in *Outlook* (Nov. 2, 1998): "One wonders why both countries do not implement the agreement already initialled on Siachen and Tulbul Navigation (Wular Barrage) finalised between 1990 and 1994." P.V. Narasimha Rao aborted an accord in November 1992, as everyone knows.

It is this record that Natwar Singh will have to grapple with. Precisely what will be his government's policy on Siachen, on the Wular Barrage Project and on Sir Creek? He must break the logjam by agreeing to a substantive dialogue on Kashmir in earnest and, simultaneously, on these three issues. Convinced that Kashmir is not being put on a backburner, Pakistan should be persuaded, as the talks progress, to settle the trio by a fair compromise.

India faces challenges to diplomatic creativity on the Kashmir dispute as also the boundary dispute with China. On both, much common ground is very much in sight already; on Kashmir perhaps for the first time in years. President Pervez Musharraf has all but abandoned the UN resolutions. Plebiscite is thus excluded. So is the LoC. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh says, "Short of secession, short of re-drawing boundaries, the Indian establishment can live with anything." It is not at all impossible to find common ground that is short of secession yet goes beyond the *status quo*.

China insists on some concession in the eastern sector in return for the ones we seek in the western sector. There is surely some room for concession if the 1914 McMahon Line is redefined in 2004 by modern methods. Having served as a member of the IFS, Natwar Singh must act energetically to revive its morale which successive PMs and EAMs undermined. The Planning Division is a shambles. The MEA deserves much better of the government. It is vain to draw much comfort from improvement in relations with the big powers, Japan, Germany, South-East Asia or the Gulf States when relations with the neighbours call for improvement. A breakthrough in this area will add immensely to India's prestige the world over.

No question of sending troops: Natwar

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JUNE 12. The External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, has said that the question of sending Indian troops to Iraq "does not arise," that the Government's position on the issue is based on the national consensus reflected in the Parliamentary resolution and that no request has been made for sending troops to Iraq.

In a prepared statement, Mr. Singh told mediapersons at the Indian Embassy here that India welcomed the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution "as a first step in restoring sovereignty" to the Iraqi people leading to stability and reconstruction. "We will keep the developments in Iraq under close review. All decisions will be taken by the Government in

close consultation with all UPA members," Mr. Singh said.

He stressed at the press conference that the reference he made to Iraq had to do with the U.N. Resolution, which is a "very complicated, delicate and sensitive issue, and one that brings the world body to a central role in that country. So when I said 'we will have a fresh look,' it had nothing to do with troops at all. It was the text of the Resolution. Nobody has asked us for troops and I think no other country has been asked." So "the spin" given to what he said was "unfortunate."

Asked to comment on the reaction in India, that of the Left parties in particular, he said: "I have spoken to comrade Surjeet and sent him the text of what I said."

No room for misinterpretation:
Page 10

India still has plenty of wiggle room on Iraq

By Siddharth Varadarajan/TNN

New Delhi: Notwithstanding external affairs minister Natwar Singh's promise to look at the latest UN resolution on Iraq "very minutely" and "take a decision when the time comes" on whether to send Indian peacekeeping troops there, there is little prospect of the UPA government biting the taboo bullet in either the short or medium-term.

The country's political climate will not allow it, the armed forces are unenthusiastic about such a dangerous mission and there are enough doubts about the 'sovereignty' of the UN-endorsed interim Iraqi government to allow New Delhi to postpone a decision on sending troops till late 2005.

Though the Left and the BJP reacted sharply to what they said was a dilution in India's stand on Iraq, Singh's remarks during his joint press conference with US secretary of state Colin Powell were open-ended. Saying that "nobody has asked us" to send troops yet, Singh emphasised that a coalition is in power and said: "But this matter will have to be placed before the government at the highest level so it would be premature for me to say yay or nea".

In its formal reaction to UN Security Council resolution 1546, passed unanimously on June 8, India had said earlier that it saw the "endorsement of the Interim Government of Iraq" as the first step towards transparent transfer of full sovereignty to Iraqi people".

Asked about the possibility of Indian soldiers joining the UN-sanctioned—but US-led—multinational force, the MEA spokesperson said, "The question will arise if and when such a request comes from the UN itself or from a fully sovereign Iraqi Government".

Since paragraph 15 of the UN resolution itself requests member countries to contribute to the multinational force, it is odd for India to say the question has not yet arisen. And by describing 1546 as merely the "first step" towards the transfer of "full sovereignty", the government has left room for itself to say that a request for troops by the Interim Government soon after June 30 could not be considered a request "from a fully sovereign Iraqi Government".

SATURDAY, JUNE 12, 2004

9.6.04
P. Singh

DON'T VACILLATE ON IRAQ

12/6

IF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister K. Natwar Singh's statement at a joint press conference in Washington with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell can be taken as a guide to the latest twist in official thinking, the United Progressive Alliance Government appears to be backsliding on Iraq — and specifically on the national decision not to send Indian troops to a country under neo-colonial occupation. Mr. Singh suggested that with the United Nations Security Council "unanimously" adopting Resolution 1546 on June 8, 2004, "the situation has changed" from the time the Indian Parliament adopted a resolution declaring that a "change of regime in Iraq through military action [was] unacceptable" and demanding "a cessation of hostilities... and quick withdrawal of coalition forces from Iraq." He signalled that New Delhi might take a new look at the possibility of sending Indian troops to serve as part of the "multinational force" in Iraq. Quite gratuitously, the External Affairs Minister hailed the resolution tabled by the occupying powers, the United States and the United Kingdom, as "a welcome step," adding that India had always favoured a central responsibility for the U.N. in Iraq. The clear implication was that the U.N. was about to take charge of the volatile situation and that sovereignty was on the point of being returned to the people of Iraq.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Singh's remarks have drawn fire from both the Left and the Bharatiya Janata Party. That these were no chance remarks is suggested by the fact that the President's Address to Parliament deviated from the position taken on the subject in the Common Minimum Programme. While the CMP promised to end the employment of "Indian mercenaries" in Iraq, the President's Address was silent on the point; instead, it welcomed "moves for an early restoration of sovereignty to the people of Iraq" and expressed satisfaction over "the U.N. involve-

ment in this process." Interestingly, the implications and tone of the External Affairs Minister's remarks are a far cry from his party's opposition in 2003 to the project of sending troops to Iraq — and an even farther cry from a column he wrote for *Frontline* (May 9, 2003) titled "Kow-towing to America," in which he poured scorn on "toadyism of a particularly repulsive kind... masquerading as pro-Americanism," denounced the "gross violations of international law, the U.N. Charter, by the U.S., U.K. and Australia," and berated his predecessor in office, Yashwant Sinha, for deviating from India's independent and principled position on international affairs. It appears that Mr. Singh needs to be reminded that if the situation in Iraq has changed, it has changed very much for the worse.

What is the essence of the situation in Iraq today? First, the restoration of sovereignty to the Iraqi people is a charade. The interim government that will supposedly exercise this sovereignty by June 30 is a creature of an illegal and outrageous occupation. Secondly, the so-called multinational force comprising nearly 140,000 American troops, 14,000 U.K. forces and a smattering of troops from a motley collection of contributing countries has nothing to do with U.N. peacekeeping. From U.N. Security Council resolution 1483 through 1511 to 1546, the occupying forces morphed into the "multinational force." But since the "unified command" remains with the U.S. and U.K., the nature of the military occupation remains unchanged. At a time when France, Germany, Russia and Canada have pointedly announced they will not participate in the "multinational force," India has nothing to gain and much to lose by getting embroiled in the mess. Sending Indian troops to serve as cannon fodder for Washington's cause in Iraq will be cardinal folly — and a betrayal of all that independent India has stood for.

THE HINDU

12 JUN 2004

Centre should make stand clear: Sinha

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, JUNE 11. The former External Affairs Minister and Bharatiya Janata Party leader, Yashwant Sinha, today reminded the Centre that "there was a Parliament resolution on Iraq" and, as yet, "no material change" in the situation in Iraq that would leave "any scope for reconsideration of the earlier Indian decision not to send troops to that country."

Mr. Sinha was reacting to a reported statement of the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, from Washington. "What I have seen of that statement and what I heard him say [on television] was that the [new] United Nations resolution was adopted unanimously, also supported by some Arab countries. This is not a new development, earlier U.N. resolutions had also been adopted unanimously."

He said the extent of sovereignty that the new Iraqi

government would enjoy after June 30 was not clear. "What kind of sovereignty, what would be the responsibilities of the coalition forces, what would be the role of the U.N. forces... We will have to watch carefully." Then there was also the grim security situation and no certainty that it would improve in the near future.

In the past, Indian troops sent abroad had worked under the command of the United Nations or on their own, but never under the command of a third country, Mr. Sinha said. "This will have to be kept in mind while taking any decision. There is no material change and, therefore, no scope for reconsideration of the decision [not to send Indian troops to Iraq]."

Mr. Sinha hoped that the Government would "come clear" on the important issue and keep in mind the "unanimous parliamentary resolution" on the subject.

India must rule out sending troops: CPI(M)

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 11. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) today demanded that the Manmohan Singh Government make it clear that there is no question of sending troops to Iraq to bolster the "American occupation."

The CPI(M) Polit Bureau's demand came in response to a statement by the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, at a press conference with the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, in Washington that the situation in Iraq had changed. In a statement, the Polit Bureau asserted that there was no change in the situation in Iraq whatsoever. "Iraq has been under American occupation for the last 14 months. There is a popular uprising against the brutal occupation," it said.

The CPI(M) said the Council resolution approved the setting up of an interim government in Iraq by June 30. It also approved the continuance of a multinational force under the U.S. command. As far as the interim government was concerned, it was handpicked by the U.S. authorities. "In fact, the Prime Minister-appointee himself has admitted that he has a longstanding relationship with the CIA. The people of Iraq have had no say whatsoever in constituting the interim government. It is nothing but a creature of the U.S. occupation," the statement said.

The CPI(M) Polit Bureau member, Prakash Karat, told reporters that the transfer of power to a new government in Iraq was not on the basis of any elections there and that the "Iraqi people have no right" in choosing a government. So, there was no change in the situation.

He said the U.N. Resolution was for a multi-national force whose command would rest with the United States. "There is no possibility of a change in this. The U.S. and British forces should quit Iraq and the power should be handed over to the real representative of the people there."

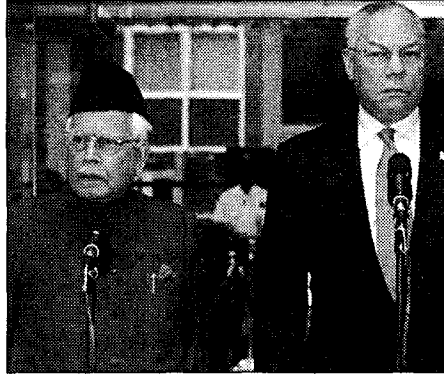
সেনা পাঠানোর প্রশ্নে বিতর্কের মুখে নটবর

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি ও নিজস্ব প্রতিনিধি, ওয়াশিংটন, ১১ জুন— কোনও বাড়তি আগ্রহ দেখাননি, শুধু ইরাকে সেনা পাঠানোর প্রস্তাব এলে ভারত তা বিবেচনা করবে বলে ওয়াশিংটনে মন্তব্য করেছিলেন বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ। মার্কিন বিদেশমন্ত্রী কলিন পাওয়েলের পাশে দাঁড়িয়ে তাঁর এই মন্তব্য কূটনৈতিক ভাবে সঠিক ছিল অবশ্যই। কিন্তু তাতে দেশে ঝড় ওঠে। বিরোধিতা করে বিবৃতি দেন কমিউনিস্টরা। পরিস্থিতির মোকাবিলা করতে কংগ্রেস নেতারা যোগাযোগ করেন প্রধানমন্ত্রীর অফিস এবং রায়বরেলী সফররত সনিয়া গাঁধীর সঙ্গে। দিনের শেষে কংগ্রেস স্পষ্ট জানায়, ইরাকে সেনা পাঠানোর প্রস্তাবই নেই, তা বিবেচনা করার প্রশ্নও উঠছে না। বিদেশমন্ত্রীর এই মন্তব্য ভারতে বিতর্ক তৈরি করলেও বুশ-প্রশাসনের সঙ্গে সুসম্পর্ক তৈরি করতে তা সাহায্য করবে। প্রাক্তন মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট রোনাল্ড রেগনের শেষকৃত্য অনুষ্ঠানে যোগ দিতে আমেরিকা গিয়েছেন নটবর।

কাশ্মীর-সহ বিভিন্ন আঞ্চলিক ও দ্বিপাক্ষিক বিষয় নিয়ে আলোচনা করেন দু'দেশের বিদেশমন্ত্রীরা। ভারত-পাক শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া সম্বন্ধে আমেরিকা উদ্বিগ্ন প্রকাশ করলেও নটবর আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন, সরকার শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া চালিয়ে নিয়ে যাবে। বৈঠকের পর পাওয়েল জানান, “ভারতের বিদেশমন্ত্রী আমায় বলেছেন যে তাঁরা দ্রুতগতিতে কাজ চালাবেন। দু'দেশের মধ্যে অর্থনৈতিক ও প্রতিরক্ষা সংক্রান্ত বিষয়গুলি এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে পারলে দু'দেশের মানুষেরই লাভ। তা ছাড়া, আঞ্চলিক সমস্যার সমাধানেও আমরা এক সঙ্গে কাজ করব।” উত্তরে নটবরও মজা করে বলেন, আমরা রাস্তায় নেমে দৌড়তে শুরু করেছি। মার্কিন বিদেশমন্ত্রী আমার থেকে দশ বছরের ছোট, তাই আমায় দৌড়তে হবে খুব জোরে।

এ দিকে, রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের প্রস্তাবে ২০০৬ সাল পর্যন্ত ইরাকে

শান্তিবাহিনী যাওয়ার পথ বন্ধ করে দেওয়ায় কমিউনিস্টরা যে ভাবে ক্ষোভ প্রকাশ করেছেন, কংগ্রেস ঘরোয়া ভাবে তাও সমর্থন করেছে। তবে তাঁরা কমিউনিস্টদের বোঝাচ্ছেন, সরকারি ভাবে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের প্রস্তাবের বিরুদ্ধে কিছু বলা যে সম্ভব নয়। রাজনৈতিক সূত্রের খবর, কমিউনিস্টদের বলা হয়েছে যে যতক্ষণ না রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের শান্তিবাহিনী ইরাকে যাচ্ছে, ততক্ষণ ভারত সেনা পাঠাবে না। তাঁরা কমিউনিস্টদের বলেছেন, ইরাকের পরিস্থিতি



ওয়াশিংটনে পাওয়েলের সঙ্গে নটবর। —এ এফ পি

নিয়ে ভারতে অসন্তোষ আছে বলে পাওয়েলকে ঘরোয়া ভাবে জানান নটবর। এতে কমিউনিস্টরা মোটামুটি সন্তুষ্ট বলে রাতে ইঙ্গিত পাওয়া গিয়েছে।

নটবর কিন্তু এক বারও বলেননি যে ভারত ইরাকে সেনা পাঠাতে উদ্যোগী হচ্ছে। কাল রাতে তিনি ইরাকে ইরাকিদের সরকার গঠনের বিষয়টিকে সামনে রেখে যা

বলেছিলেন তা হল, ইরাকের পরিস্থিতি পাল্টে গিয়েছে। রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ নতুন করে একটি প্রস্তাব নিয়েছে এবং ভারত সেই প্রস্তাবকে স্বাগত জানিয়েছে। এর পর সেনা পাঠানোর প্রশ্ন উঠলে নটবর বলেন, কোনও প্রস্তাব এখনও নেই। প্রস্তাব এলে তা বিবেচনা করার কথা জানিয়ে তিনি যোগ করেন, “আমাদের দেশে এখন জোট সরকার চলছে। তারপর আমাদের নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটিতেও আলোচনা করতে হবে। এখনই হ্যাঁ বা না কিছুই বলতে পারব না।” তাঁর এই বক্তব্য টেলিভিশনে দেখে মাথায় বাজ পড়ে বামপন্থীদের। যে সব বেসরকারি সংস্থা ভারতীয়দের রক্ষা হিসাবে নিযুক্ত করে ইরাকে পাঠাচ্ছে তাদের থামিয়ে দেওয়ার জন্য তারা সরকারের উপর চাপ তৈরি করছেন। ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচিতেও সেই বিষয়টি রাখতে জোরাজুরি করেছিলেন তাঁরা।

শেষ পর্যন্ত সেই দাবি অবশ্য মানা হয়নি। কিন্তু সেই পরিস্থিতি থেকে আচমকা ইরাকে সেনা পাঠানোর সম্ভাবনা দেখে সি পি এমের দিল্লিতে উপস্থিত পলিটব্যুরো সদস্যরা সকালেই জরুরি বৈঠকে বসেন। ফোনে কথা বলেন অন্য পলিটব্যুরো সদস্যদের সঙ্গে। বৈঠক সেরে বেরিয়ে প্রকাশ কারাত বলেন, “ইরাকের পরিস্থিতির কোনও পরিবর্তন হয়নি।” কারণ ইরাকিরা নিজেদের সরকার নিজেরা নির্বাচন করেননি; তা চাপিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে। এবং সেখানে এখনও মার্কিন নেতৃত্বাধীন বহুজাতিক ফৌজ রয়েছে।

ইতিমধ্যে সকালে চার বাম দলের নেতারা অর্থমন্ত্রী পি চিদম্বরম ও প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের সঙ্গে বিশ্ব বাণিজ্য সংস্থার আগামী বৈঠক নিয়ে আলোচনা করেন। সেখানে চিদম্বরম তাঁদের বলেন, এই বৈঠকে বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী কমল নাথ কোনও প্রতিশ্রুতি দেবেন না। সেই বৈঠক থেকে ফিরে সি পি আইয়ের সাধারণ সম্পাদক এ বি বর্ধনও একই ভাবে সেনা পাঠানো সংক্রান্ত বক্তব্যের বিরোধিতা করেন। প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী দেবগৌড়াও একই ধরনের বিবৃতি দেন।

Natwar hints at rethink on troops for Iraq, angers Left

HT Correspondents

Washington/New Delhi, June 11

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister Natwar Singh whipped up a storm today by announcing New Delhi could rethink the matter of sending troops to Iraq following the latest UN resolution on the Arab country.

The political gaffe, which came at a joint press conference with US Secretary of State Colin Powell in Washington in the early hours of Friday (IST), drew barbed comments from a delighted BJP and a furious demand for clarification from Congress ally CPI(M).

"The government must make it clear there is no question of sending Indian troops to Iraq to bolster the American occupation," the CPI(M) politburo said.

The BJP, repeatedly accused by the Congress of kowtowing to the Americans, sought to turn the tables on its enemy. "I don't think it's a well thought out statement. It is very strange that he (Singh) has made it on US soil," BJP leader and former foreign minister Yashwant Sinha said. "It is possible he was influenced by his meeting with US officials... the people have to decide whether this is not bowing to American pressure."

A worried Congress scrambled to control the damage with a statement that India has neither received any proposal to send troops



We'll look at the (UN) resolution very minutely. And we'll take a decision when the time comes.

—Natwar Singh

to Iraq, nor is it considering any such move. New Delhi is committed only to economic reconstruction of Iraq, party spokesman Anand Sharma told reporters.

Singh had claimed that though India had earlier refused to send troops to Iraq, the situation had now changed. "The resolution of the last Parliament said we were against sending troops to Iraq. But the situation has now changed. The Iraq reso-

lution was unanimously passed in the UN and there are Arab members in it," the foreign minister had said.

"With regard to Indian troops, nobody has asked us. We'll look at the resolution very minutely. And we will take a decision when the time comes."

Singh then left a hint of ambiguity by adding: "I must emphasise that the matter will have to be placed before the government at the highest levels, so it would be premature for me to say aye or nay."

The CPI(M), however, was emphatic that there had been "no change in the situation in Iraq whatsoever. Iraq has been under American occupation for the last 14 months. There is a popular uprising against the brutal occupation." The party maintained that the Security Council resolution for the stationing of a multinational force in Iraq till 2006 did not mean there would be a UN peacekeeping force.

Singh, however, was "delighted" that the US-UK resolution had been adopted. "That is a welcome step and we have always been in favour of the UN being involved in a central responsibility along with their friends and other members of the Security Council," he said.

Powell expressed gratitude for India's support to the resolution, which endorses a transfer of political authority to an interim Iraqi government at the end of June.

Natwar opens Iraq window

Clarify 'Ambiguous' Remarks, Says CPM

By Chidanand Rajghatta/TNN

Washington/New Delhi: External affairs minister Natwar Singh has indicated that India could consider sending troops to Baghdad under the aegis of UN only if it was convinced the world body had a central role in Iraq.

"It is premature for me to say aye or nay," he said on Thursday, in a clear indication that the Congress-led government was willing to examine the issue if the ground situation in Iraq changed to bring the UN to the forefront. He agreed the situation had changed following the passage of the US-UK resolution making way for a sovereign Iraqi government.

"We are a coalition government, so the matter will

have to be discussed by the government and by the cabinet committee on security" and the Congress' allies, he said after meeting US secretary of state Colin Powell here.

Singh's remarks drew a sharp reaction from CPM, a key ally which is supporting the Manmohan Singh government from outside. The "ambiguous" remarks must be clarified, the CPM politburo said in a statement in New Delhi on Friday. "The government must make it clear that there is no question of sending Indian troops to Iraq to bolster the American occupation."

Singh is here to attend former

US president Ronald Reagan's memorial service on Friday. It was the first high-level contact between the two countries since the installation of the UPA government. Powell expressed gratitude for India's support for the UN Security Council resolution on Iraq that endorsed the planned US transfer of political authority to an interim Iraqi government at the end of the month. Singh and Powell pledged to further strengthen mutual economic and security ties notwithstanding

the change of guard that has brought in a Left-Centre government in India.

They endorsed the existing strong ties and said they intended to build on it quickly. Both sides publicly allayed apprehensions

that the recent changes in New Delhi would in any way slow down or dilute the ties. Powell said the US would continue to have a "warm and productive" relationship with whichever government the people of India elected. Singh said New Delhi intended to follow the foreign policy of the past 57 years evolved through a broad national consensus. Between these broad sentiments, there were indications—amid some convivial banter between the two men at a media stake-out—that the two countries would actually accelerate the pace and intensity of the engagement.

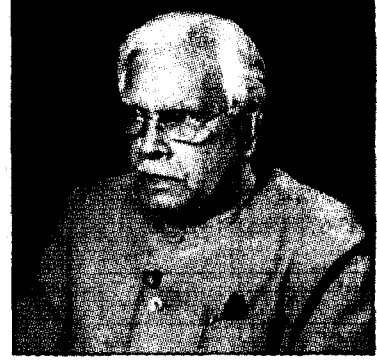


External affairs minister Natwar Singh with US secretary of state Colin Powell in Washington

ইরাকে সেনা পাঠাবার ইঙ্গিত! বিতর্কে নটবর

ওয়াশিংটন ও দিল্লি, ১১ জুন (পি টি আই)—
পরিবর্তিত পরিস্থিতিতে ইরাকে ভারতের সেনা
পাঠানোর বিষয়টি বিবেচনা করে দেখার ইঙ্গিত
দিলেন বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিং। তিনি বলেছেন,
রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ ইরাক প্রস্তাব পাস হওয়ায় ওই ইস্যুতে
ভারত নতুন করে ভেবে দেখতে পারে। নটবরের
মন্তব্য নিয়ে দেশে তীব্র বিতর্ক দেখা দিয়েছে।
একদিকে বামপন্থীরা, অন্যদিকে বি জে পি—
দু'পক্ষই সমালোচনায় সরব। কংগ্রেস অবশ্য
বলেছে, ইরাকে সেনা পাঠানোর কোনও প্রস্তাব
আসেনি, পুনর্বিবেচনার কথাও তাই ওঠে না।
রেগনের শেষকৃত্য অনুষ্ঠানে যোগ দিতে নটবর এখন
মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে। ওয়াশিংটনে মার্কিন বিদেশ সচিব
কলিন পাওয়েলের সঙ্গে যৌথ সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে
নটবর বলেন, আগের সংসদে আমরা ইরাকে সেনা
পাঠানোর তীব্র বিরোধিতা করেছিলাম। পরিস্থিতি
পাল্টে গেছে, রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ ইরাক প্রস্তাব গৃহীত, তাতে
আরবদেরও সমর্থন মিলেছে। ইরাক এখনও তাদের
দেশ পুনর্গঠনের কাজে ভারতীয় বাহিনীর সাহায্য

চায়নি। চাইলে বিষয়টি বিবেচনা করে দেখা হবে।
তবে চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার আগে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের গৃহীত
প্রস্তাবটি আমরা খুঁটিয়ে দেখব। উল্লেখ্য, নিরাপত্তা
পরিষদে ইরাক প্রস্তাব অনুমোদন করিয়ে আমেরিকা
বলেছে, ৩০ জুন অন্তর্বর্তী সরকারের হাতে ক্ষমতা
অর্পণের পর জোট সেনাদের সঙ্গে বহুজাতিক
বাহিনীও ইরাকে থাকবে। ২০০৬ সাল পর্যন্ত। তার
মধ্যে ইরাকের সাধারণ নির্বাচন হবে এবং নির্বাচিত
সরকার পরবর্তী পদক্ষেপ ঠিক করবে। বহুজাতিক
বাহিনীর ঘাড়ের অনেকখানি দায়িত্ব ছেড়ে আমেরিকা
নিশ্চিত হতে চায়। বহু দেশই তাদের অসম্মতির কথা
জানিয়েছে। ফ্রান্স, জার্মানি, রাশিয়া, কানাডা
ইতিমধ্যেই না বলে দিয়েছে। বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর
সিংয়ের কথায় দারুণ ক্ষুব্ধ সি পি এম। তাদের প্রশ্ন,
ইরাকে সেনা পাঠানোর বিষয়টি পুনর্বিবেচনার
আশ্বাস নটবর দিলেন কি করে? তাহলে কি ধরে
নিতে হবে ইরাক নীতি বদলাচ্ছে? পলিটব্যুরো এক
বিবৃতিতে বলেছে, 'ইরাক পরিস্থিতির আদৌ
এরপর ২ পাতায়



তীব্র প্রতিবাদ
সি পি এমের

ইরাকে সেনা পাঠাবার ইঙ্গিত

১ পাতার পর
পরিবর্তন হয়নি। গত ১৪ মাস ধরে সেখানে মার্কিন আগ্রাসন চলছে। এই
আগ্রাসনের বিরুদ্ধে ইরাকের মানুষ বিদ্রোহে ফেটে পড়েছেন। ইরাক প্রস্তাবে
বহুজাতিক ফৌজের কথা থাকলেও তার কর্তৃত্ব থাকবে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ নয়,
আমেরিকার হাতে। ফ্রান্স, জার্মানিসহ বিভিন্ন দেশ সেনা পাঠাচ্ছে না। মার্কিন
আগ্রাসনের ভিত শক্ত করতে ভারত সেনা পাঠানোর কথা ভাববে? সি পি
এমের দাবি, নটবর ব্যাখ্যা দিন। পলিটব্যুরো সদস্য প্রকাশ কারাত বলেছেন,
ইরাকের ছবিটা কোথায় বদলেছে? নির্বাচিত সরকারের হাতে যেমন ক্ষমতা
ছাড়া হচ্ছে না, রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের হাতেও তেমন অন্তর্বর্তী সরকারের দায়িত্ব থাকছে
না। বুশ-ব্রায়ারের নিয়ন্ত্রণেই সব কিছু থাকবে। নটবর সিংয়ের বিবৃতির কড়া
সমালোচনা করেছে বি জে পি-ও। প্রাক্তন বিদেশমন্ত্রী এবং দলীয় মুখপাত্র
যশোবন্ত সিংহ বলেছেন, মার্কিন চাপের কাছে হার মানল ভারত। সব দলের
মতামত নিয়ে তবেই সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া উচিত। এন ডি এ জমানায় সেনা
পাঠানোর বিরুদ্ধে গত লোকসভায় জোর সওয়াল করেছিলেন নটবর। এখন
তাহলে উল্টো বলছেন কেন? ওয়াশিংটনের মাটিতে দাঁড়িয়ে বিপজ্জনক উক্তি
করেছেন নটবর। অর্থনৈতিক ও বাণিজ্যিক সুযোগ-সুবিধে পেতেই ভারত
নমনীয় মনোভাব দেখাচ্ছে বলে যশোবন্তের অভিযোগ। কংগ্রেস মুখপাত্র আনন্দ
শর্মা এর জবাবে বলেন, সেনা পাঠানোর কথা নটবর বলেননি। বরং, তেমন
কোনও প্রস্তাব যে ভারতের সামনে নেই, সেটাই বলেছেন। এদিকে, কলকাতায়
সি পি এমের রাজ্য সম্পাদক অনিল বিশ্বাস বলেন, ইরাকে ভারতের সেনা
পাঠানো চলবে না। তা হলে, সংসদে ও বাইরে সর্বতোভাবে আন্দোলন করব।

AAJK 11 12 JUN 2004

পাকিস্তান নিয়ে অসতর্ক মন্তব্যের জন্য নটবরকে ভৎসনা সনিয়ার

সুমন চট্টোপাধ্যায়
ও জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল ● নয়াদিল্লি

৩ জুন: পাকিস্তান সম্পর্কে অসতর্ক মন্তব্য করে সমস্যা সৃষ্টির জন্য বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহকে ভৎসনা করেছেন কংগ্রেসনেত্রী সনিয়া গাঁধী। সেই সঙ্গেই সিঙ্গাপুরে গিয়ে একটি বেসরকারি অনুষ্ঠানে মার্কিন প্রতিরক্ষাসচিব ডেনাল্ড রামসফেল্ডের সঙ্গে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের পূর্বনির্ধারিত ঘরোয়া বৈঠকটিও বাতিল করা হয়েছে। সনিয়া গাঁধী আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ এবং প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণববাবুর সঙ্গে প্রায় দেড় ঘণ্টা ধরে বর্তমান আন্তর্জাতিক পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে আলোচনা করেন।

সিঙ্গাপুরের বেসরকারি সংস্থা 'ইনস্টিটিউট অফ ডিফেন্স স্টাডিজ' আয়োজিত ২৬টি দেশের প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রীদের সম্মেলনে যোগ দিতে যাওয়ার কথা ছিল প্রণববাবুর। সেই সম্মেলনের অবসরেই রামসফেল্ডের সঙ্গে তাঁর ঘরোয়া আলোচনা হওয়ার কথা ছিল। কিন্তু বিদেশ মন্ত্রক এই সফর সম্পর্কে তাদের মতামত জানাতে গিয়ে বলে যে,

প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রীর মতো শীর্ষ ব্যক্তিত্বের সঙ্গে মার্কিন প্রতিরক্ষাসচিবের প্রথম বৈঠকটি এ ভাবে 'ঘরোয়া' না-করে আনুষ্ঠানিক হওয়া উচিত। দু'দেশের কোনও এক পক্ষের কাছ থেকে আনুষ্ঠানিক আমন্ত্রণের ভিত্তিতেই এই আলোচনা শুরু হওয়া উচিত। সরকারের এই সিদ্ধান্তের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে প্রণববাবু তাঁর আগামী কালের সিঙ্গাপুর সফর বাতিল করেছেন।

প্রণববাবুর পরিবর্তে প্রতিরক্ষাসচিব অজয় প্রসাদ এই বৈঠকে যোগ দিতে যাচ্ছেন। এই সিদ্ধান্তের মাধ্যমে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার আমেরিকার কাছেও একটা বার্তা পৌঁছে দিল।

নতুন সরকার আজ আরও কয়েকটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে। মনমোহন সিংহ দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কে আরও উন্নতির পথে এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে সক্রিয় হলেও পাকিস্তানের উপরে কিছুটা কূটনৈতিক চাপও রাখতে চায় ভারত। সেপ্টেম্বরে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের সাধারণ অধিবেশনে যোগ দিতে গেলে তখন মনমোহন পারভেজ মুশারফের সঙ্গে ঘরোয়া আলোচনাও করবেন। মুশারফের সঙ্গে ফোনেও মনমোহনের সদর্শক কথাবার্তা হয়েছে।

তবে বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহের শিমলা চুক্তি সম্পর্কিত মন্তব্য নিয়ে পাকিস্তানের অসন্তোষ কেন, চিঠি দিয়ে ভারত তা পাক সরকারের কাছে জানতে চাইবে।

শিমলা চুক্তির ভিত্তিতে নটবরের আলোচনার প্রস্তাব নিয়ে অবশ্য সম্প্রতি মন্ত্রিসভাতেও প্রকাশ্য বিতর্ক হয়। নটবর যে ভাবে শুধুই পঞ্চশীল নীতি, জোট নিরপেক্ষ আন্দোলন এবং শিমলা চুক্তির প্রাসঙ্গিকতা তুলে ধরেছেন, তা নিয়ে বহু মন্ত্রীও সরব হন। শুধু কংগ্রেসই নয়, বেশ কিছু শরিক নেতাও নটবরকে মুখে কুলুপ এঁটে থাকতে অনুরোধ করেন। বিষয়টি নিয়ে সনিয়াও নটবরের সঙ্গে এর পর কথা বলেছেন। তাঁকে সংযত থাকতে বলা হয়েছে।

আমেরিকার সঙ্গে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ককে আরও মজবুত করতে চাইলেও এই সরকার আমেরিকার সঙ্গে সম্পর্কের ক্ষেত্রে কূটনৈতিক দরকষাকষির অবকাশ রাখতে চাইছেন। এ জন্য ঠিক হয়েছে, তালিবান এবং পারভেজ মুশারফের ভূমিকা সম্পর্কে আমেরিকার দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি আগে স্পষ্ট ভাবে জানতে চাইবে দিল্লি। তার পরে কূটনৈতিক আলাপ-আলোচনার পথে এগোনো হবে।

The angularities of Natwar Singh's foreign policy vision are damaging

Dangerous loyalties

The external affairs minister, Kunwar Natwar Singh, began well. He said the right things, made the right moves. This is not surprising for someone trained in diplomacy at the age of 22 — and as long as 51 years ago. He spent the next 31 years in the civil service practising what he was taught, and then did a short stint as minister of state in the external affairs ministry in a different role as a politician.

But before the week was out, Natwar Singh, the diplomat, gave way to Natwar Singh, the individual. The new foreign-policy team in South Block, made up of Singh and the national security adviser, J.N. Dixit, has the potential to be a dream team, if only the new minister can resist the urge to be himself. If Singh fails in this effort, disaster awaits South Block at a time when Indian diplomacy is at the crossroads and facing some of its biggest challenges since Jawaharlal Nehru steered the country's foreign policy along pioneering lines uncharted by any country in history.

The danger of "Natwar Singh acting like Natwar Singh" apart, the threat to Indian diplomacy in the new dispensation comes from what the new minister is likely to say and do out of his loyalty and debt of gratitude to the Nehru-Gandhi family. That loyalty, incidentally, is genuine, unlike in the vast majority of Congressmen, who are at their best in the party's culture of sycophancy.

The threat to India's foreign policy and national interest stemming from such loyalty was in evidence when Singh made jaws drop in South Block last weekend by announcing in Jaipur that Sonia Gandhi would visit Pakistan. India and Pakistan have agreed on a formula for talks, which, so far, remains unaffected by the change in government in New Delhi. Singh does not need anyone to tell him that a visit to Pakistan by Sonia is unlike a trip to Karachi by her two children to watch cricket. To announce a visit by Sonia to Pakistan at this stage is to pre-empt those talks, the schedule of which is based on the rationale that an improvement in relations with Pakistan is a process of graduation.

The Bharatiya Janata Party-led government insisted that talks should begin at the level of joint secretaries and move up, depending on the progress made at each step. For this reason, it resisted the idea of a meeting between the foreign ministers, Yashwant Sinha and Khurshid Kasuri. Singh's announcement that the supreme leader of the ruling alliance would visit Pakistan has undercut a peace process that held out hopes of some accommodation between Islamabad and New Delhi.

Besides, where does this leave the prime minister, Manmohan Singh? He may be a political light-weight at home, but in bypassing him for the first con-

crete foreign policy announcement by the new government, the external affairs minister has diminished the prime minister in the eyes of the world: much more than anything that the left parties have so far done to undermine the new prime minister's authority or his government's credibility. Indeed, very much more in this case, because Manmohan Singh was born in Gah, now in Pakistan and this had potential for dealing with Pakistan as in the case of the former prime minister, I.K. Gujral.



By inviting Sonia to visit Pakistan and getting Singh to thoughtlessly accept that invitation on her behalf, hurriedly and without due consideration of its consequences, Pervez Musharraf has once again shown how good he is at manipulation. This should not have come as a surprise to an external affairs minister who has watched and understood how Musharraf has manipulated the Americans, the Australians and the British since September 11, 2001, and the entire Commonwealth in the most recent example of its re-admission to that organization.

Musharraf stands to gain in three ways by getting Sonia to accept his invitation and eventually making sure that her visit to Pakistan takes place. First, he undercuts Manmohan Singh as prime minister, and in turn, the decision-making process in the Indian government, where, by convention, the most important foreign-policy decisions are taken by the prime minister's office, not the external affairs ministry.

Second, Pakistan fears J.N. Dixit because they know from their experi-

ence of dealing with him — as high commissioner in Islamabad and later as foreign secretary — that he is someone they cannot play games with. Dixit was also part of Indira Gandhi's team, which broke up Pakistan and created Bangladesh: so they realize what he is capable of. If Sonia goes to Pakistan, it is only natural that, until the visit takes place, every decision on Pakistan in New Delhi will take into consideration how it will affect the Congress president. After the visit has taken place, decisions will be made on politi-

‘ The threat to Indian diplomacy comes from what Natwar Singh is likely to say or do out of his loyalty to the Nehru-Gandhi family ’

cal considerations built around that event. In that process, decision-making on Pakistan will move from the PMO to 10, Janpath, and it is inevitable that Dixit and the internal security adviser, M.K. Narayanan, both of whom have strong views on Pakistan, will be marginalized. Could Musharraf hope for more? And if it can happen with Pakistan, will not India's other neighbours want to follow Musharraf's example?

Musharraf is a keen student of history and precedents. By now, he would have read all the classified accounts of Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Islamabad,

when Rajiv and Benazir Bhutto were both prime ministers, a visit often derisively referred to as "my-mummy-your-daddy-diplomacy" between India and Pakistan. By emphasizing the Shimla Agreement and the Rajiv Gandhi visit during the last one week and with his selective amnesia about Lahore, Agra and this year's summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in Islamabad, Natwar Singh has shown what damage he can do because of the angularities in his foreign policy vision.

It is fortuitous for Singh that one of his favourite quotes is a remark by Winston Churchill that "eating words has never given me indigestion". Leaders like Kofi Annan may forgive Singh for his indiscretions in writing and in speech during the 15 years that he was kept out of India's foreign policy loop — including, very interestingly, the five years of the prime-ministership of fellow Congressman, P.V. Narasimha Rao. But as foreign minister, how will Singh live down a comment, made as recently as August last year, that India's nuclear tests "made Pakistan a nuclear power. It has given Pakistan permanent defence parity with India. The conventional defence superiority we had for 51 years disappeared in May 1998. And where is our nuclear deterrent?"

The last time Singh was in South Block as junior minister, he opted not to have an Indian Foreign Service officer on his personal staff. Few foreign ministers anywhere in the world keep professional diplomats out of their offices unless there are good reasons to do so. In Singh's case, it was typical of the man: his firm belief that no candidate selected to the IFS since 1953 is capable of giving him advice. It is no surprise that throughout his tenure in the IFS — and 20 years after he left it — there has been a virtual industry in jokes and anecdotes about the man behind his back among his peers and juniors.

When Singh morphed into a politician from a diplomat, he carried his attitudes with him to his new calling. In 1995, according to Singh's own account of an episode, the late Phoolan Devi one day telephoned him. Singh's response was to tell her that she had got the wrong number. As if to say "Why would someone like Phoolan Devi phone me, Natwar Singh?" Phoolan would have been nobody if she was not persevering. She got a meeting with Singh. But Singh phoned her on the morning of their meeting to make sure that she would arrive on time. Why would someone like Phoolan be punctual?

It is not easy for someone to change at the age of 73. If Singh does not, Indian diplomacy will pay a price not only for the external affairs minister's persona, but equally for his idea that the country's foreign policy has to be jump-started from where Rajiv Gandhi — whom few of today's world leaders remember — left off in 1989.

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K.P. NAYAR

Nehru swots

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Natwar Singh mustn't make a fetish of it

The fear that Natwar Singh's ideas about foreign policy are driven not by realism but by *idee fixes* derived from the Nehru era is reinforced by reports that he is making external affairs babus turn into Nehru swots, asking them to bone up on his "classical" foreign policy. Nehruvian foreign policy had its good and bad points, and the world has moved on considerably since Nehru's heyday; there is little point in doing to him what Marxists do to *Das Kapital*. Nehru had a keen sense of how domestic policy meshed with foreign policy where he was very active. That is unexceptionable, but the domestic policy Nehru pursued comprised economic autarky, the public sector occupying the "commanding heights" of the economy, and licence raj. A foreign policy stressing Left-leaning non-alignment would be consistent with this, but out of touch with globalisation in the 21st century, not to mention the battle against international terror.

Before reverence about a supposed "golden era" of foreign policy under Nehru takes hold in the new dispensation, it is necessary to enumerate some of its disasters. Nehru halted the advance of Indian troops into Jammu and Kashmir in 1948, under the advice of Lord Mountbatten (so much for the "independence" of his foreign policy). That, together with calling in the UN, allowed Pakistan to retain its segment of Kashmir and entertain hopes of gaining the remainder. In 1971 Nehru's daughter had a golden opportunity of resolving the Kashmir dispute, when we had captured Pakistani territory as well as 93,000 soldiers, and could have exchanged them for acknowledgement by Islamabad of the LOC as international border. We, however, gave them up for nothing, and Kashmir has been a festering sore in India's side for over half a century. Similar illusions about China led to lack of defence preparedness as well as lack of allies who could have helped when China invaded in 1962. If, for sentimental pan-Asian reasons, we place all our eggs in the Chinese basket once again, Beijing, currently engaged in aggressive muscle-flexing over Taiwan, will read such signals as appeasement and not hesitate to take advantage.

Nehru's prominence in international affairs depended on a certain moral aura that India came to acquire during its non-violent independence movement. This aura has long since faded — Nehru found that out as early as 1962 — and no exertions of Natwar Singh and his compatriots can possibly bring it back. It is indispensable that Delhi adjust to give-and-take in contemporary international affairs, and incorporate a rather large dose of realism in its foreign policy.

বিদেশ নীতির আশ্বাস

মনমোহন সিংহের সরকার ক্ষমতাসীন হইতে না হইতেই ভারত-পাকিস্তান দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কে যে অনিশ্চয়তা দেখা দিয়াছিল, বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহের ঘোষণায় তাহা অন্তত আপাতত কাটিয়া গিয়াছে। ইসলামাবাদকে নয়াদিল্লি এই বলিয়া আশ্বস্ত করিতে পারিয়াছে যে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কে যে মধুচন্দ্রিমা অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর আমলে সূচিত হইয়াছিল, তাহা অব্যাহত থাকিবে। মনমোহন সিংহ প্রধানমন্ত্রী নিযুক্ত হইয়া তাঁহার প্রথম সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে পাকিস্তানের সহিত সুপ্রতিবেশীসুলভ সম্পর্কে ভারতীয় বিদেশ নীতির অগ্রাধিকার তালিকায় রাখিয়াছিলেন। কিন্তু বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ সিমলা চুক্তির ভিত্তিতে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সমস্যা সমাধানের কথা বলাতেই ইসলামাবাদের কূটনৈতিক মহলে বিরাগ প্রতিক্রিয়া শুরু হয়। পাক কর্তৃপক্ষের ধারণা হয়, কাশ্মীরকে বাদ দিয়াই ভারত পাকিস্তানের সহিত বন্ধুত্ব গড়িতে আগ্রহী। শেষ পর্যন্ত নটবর সিংহকে বলিতে হয় যে কেবল সিমলা চুক্তি নয়, অন্যান্য দ্বিপাক্ষিক চুক্তিও মান্য করা হইবে। পাকিস্তানের এই প্রতিক্রিয়া ভারত সম্পর্কে তাহার স্পর্শকাতরতাকে নূতন ভাবে অনুধাবন করিতে সাহায্য করে। একটি বেফাঁস মন্তব্য, একটি ভুল সংকেত একটা গোটা যুগের দীর্ঘ প্রয়াসকে লহমায় বানচাল করিয়া দিতে পারে।

নটবর সিংহ অবশ্য বাজপেয়ীর আমলের পাকিস্তান নীতির ধারাবাহিকতা রক্ষায় নূতন সরকারের অঙ্গীকার ও দায়বদ্ধতার কথা দৃঢ় ভাবে পুনরুচ্চারণ করিয়াছেন। তবে তিনি এ ব্যাপারে পূর্বতন সরকারের তুলনায় বেশ কয়েক ধাপ আগাইয়াও গিয়াছেন, যাহা সরকারের পাকিস্তান বিষয়ক নীতিতে পরিবর্তনেরই ইঙ্গিত দেয়। যেমন বিদেশমন্ত্রী বলিয়াছেন, সীমান্তের ও পার হইতে জঙ্গি অনুপ্রবেশ বন্ধ হওয়াকে তিনি ইসলামাবাদের সহিত আলোচনার পূর্বশর্ত করিবেন না। পাঠকের মনে পড়িবে, এই মর্মে বাজপেয়ী-আডবাণীদের অসংখ্য হুমকির কথা, যত দিন না জঙ্গি অনুপ্রবেশ বন্ধ হয়, তত দিন পাকিস্তানের সহিত কথা বন্ধ রাখার শপথের কথা। নটবর সম্ভবত এতদ্বারা পূর্বতন সরকারের পাকিস্তান নীতির রূপকারদের খোঁচাও দিতে চাহিয়াছেন। তাহার এই উচ্চারণকে পূর্বসূরির প্রতি তির্যক বক্তব্য বলিয়া শনাক্ত করিতে ভুল হয় না, যখন দেখা যায়, বিভিন্ন সময়ে প্রাক্তন সরকারের নেতা-মন্ত্রীদের পাকবিরোধী রণোন্নততার দৃষ্টান্তগুলি তিনি প্রসঙ্গত চয়ন করিতেছেন। 'পাকিস্তানের সহিত অন্তিম ক্ষণ পর্যন্ত লড়াই চালানোর' সংকল্প, সংসদে জঙ্গি হামলার পর

পাকিস্তানের সহিত সড়ক, রেল, বিমান ও জলপথে যোগাযোগ বন্ধ করিয়া দেওয়া, ক্রিকেট-সম্পর্ক স্থগিত রাখা, শান্তি-আলোচনার প্রক্রিয়া শুরু করিয়া দেওয়া, রণং দেখি মনোভাব লইয়া বিপুল সরকারি অর্থব্যয়ে পাক সীমান্ত বরাবর যুদ্ধপ্রস্তুত লক্ষ-লক্ষ সৈন্য, কামান, ট্যাংক, সাঁজোয়া মোতায়ন করা, এ সব ঘটনা তো বাজপেয়ী সরকারের আমলেই ঘটিয়াছে। যখন সহসা বাজপেয়ী উত্তেজনা হ্রাস করিয়া শান্তির পথে অগ্রসর হইতে মনস্থ করিলেন, তখনও কিন্তু সীমান্তে জঙ্গি অনুপ্রবেশ কিংবা কাশ্মীর উপত্যকায় সন্ত্রাসবাদী হামলা আগের মতোই অব্যাহত ছিল। নটবর সিংহ বলিতেছেন, তাহারা ওই রণোন্নাদনার শরিক ছিলেন না, জঙ্গি ক্রিয়াকলাপের নিন্দা করিলেও তাহার দায়ে পাকিস্তানের সহিত আলোচনা বা দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ক বন্ধ করার পক্ষপাতী ছিলেন না। তিনি যে বাজপেয়ী সরকারের বিদেশ নীতির প্রতি কটাক্ষ করিতেছেন, তাহাতে সংশয় নাই।

হয়তো এ ধরনের চাপান-উতোর অনিবার্য। বিশেষত, সরকার বদলের সঙ্গে-সঙ্গে বিদেশ নীতির মৌলিক ধারা বদলাইতে পারে— এমন একটি ধারণা নূতন শাসক গোষ্ঠী সম্পর্কে প্রচারের উদ্যোগ দেখা গিয়াছে, তাহার প্রতিক্রিয়ায় নূতন বিদেশমন্ত্রীর এই মন্তব্য অপ্রত্যাশিত নয়। নটবর সিংহ তাই বলিয়া এখানেই থামিয়া থাকেন নাই। তিনি চলতি মাসেই দুই দেশের পরমাণু বিশেষজ্ঞদের দিল্লিতে বৈঠকে বসিয়া পরমাণু নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ে পারস্পরিক আস্থা-বৃদ্ধির বৈঠকের দিন ঘোষণা করিয়াছেন। তাহার সপ্তাহখানেকের মধ্যে, এ মাসেই, দিল্লিতেই দুই দেশের বিদেশসচিবরা বৈঠকে বসিবেন। সুতরাং সরকার পরিবর্তনে কোনও কিছুই থামিয়া যায় নাই। যাঁহারা ক্ষমতা হস্তান্তরজনিত কালক্ষেপে অসহিষ্ণু হইতেছেন, তাঁহাদের মধ্যে পূর্বতন সরকারের শোকগ্রস্ত অনুরাগী থাকা সম্ভব। এমন কিছু বিলম্ব হয় নাই যে এত ব্যাকুল হইতে হইবে! সত্য, নূতন সরকার সর্ব বিষয়েই কিছু পরিবর্তন আনিবে। সে পরিবর্তন কখনও সূক্ষ্ম, কখনও স্থূল। কিন্তু তাহার এজিয়ার জনাদেশ এই সরকারকে দিয়াছে, ঠিক যেমন পূর্ববর্তী বাজপেয়ী সরকারকে দিয়াছিল। আগের সরকারের অনুসৃত পথ হইতে বিচ্যুত হইলেই 'গেল-গেল' রব তোলা অর্থহীন। বিদেশ নীতিতে বাজপেয়ী সরকার কিছু ইতিবাচক পরিবর্তন আনিয়াছিল। তবে তাহার বীজতলা রাজীব গান্ধী, নরসিংহ রাও ও ইন্ড্রকুমার গুজরালের আমলেই রচিত। সেগুলি রদ করা হইবে, এমন কোনও হুমকি বিদেশমন্ত্রী দেন নাই। অগ্রাধিকারে কিছু বদল ঘটতেই পারে।

Continuity and change

By K.K. Katyal

Foreign policy continuity will be pronounced in India's relations with Pakistan and China, while there could be a change of emphasis in the dealings with the U.S. and West Asia.

Handwritten notes: *India's Foreign Policy 14.10.2001*

THERE SHOULD be minimal interruption in continuity vis-à-vis foreign policy — and, as such, little dislocation — because of the change of guard in New Delhi. This much is clear from the Common Minimum Programme of the new ruling combine, United Progressive Alliance, thrashed out after intense discussions among the leaders of the Congress, its allies and the outside supporter, the Left. This will be in sharp contrast to other subjects — economic policy, for instance — which could see a marked departure from some of the policies of the previous Government.

The areas in which the foreign policy continuity will be pronounced include relations with Pakistan and China, and approach to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). On the other hand, there could be a change of emphasis as regards dealings with the United States and the approach to West Asia, the Palestine issue in particular.

External relations figured but marginally in the campaign for the Lok Sabha elections. That was because of the national consensus on foreign policy, in keeping with the tradition from the Nehru era. It was, therefore, surprising that the UPA leaders should have spent considerable time in evolving agreed formulations on “diplomatic” matters. In the past, national consensus meant broad agreement between the two major formations, one led by the BJP, the other by the Congress. It did not take into account the fact that the Left had distinct views on some key issues. Now that it is an important element of the new dispensation, its stand had to be given due weight. Hence the time taken by the fine-tuning exercise.

The initial stages of the Vajpayee Government witnessed some serious distortions of the policy as practised in the preceding period. These were later undone as part of the self-correction process. Three examples. A thoughtless statement by George Fernandes, the then Defence Minister, in April 1998 — on China posing the biggest threat to India — nearly ruined the process of normalisation, carefully nurtured since its bold beginning in December 1988 by Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister. The damage wrought had yet to be contained when New Delhi delivered another blow. In a letter to Washington and other permanent members of the

United Nations Security Council, India cited the threat from China in defence of its decision to conduct nuclear tests. Around that time, a NAM summit saw India clashing with the host country, South Africa, and its supreme leader, Nelson Mandela, on Kashmir. The problem was, however, sorted out quickly. Visibly upset on these counts, the Congress — Natwar Singh, the present External Affairs Minister, on its behalf — threatened to conduct parallel diplomacy to safeguard cherished relations and interests. The tilt towards the U.S. during Jaswant Singh's tenure as the External Affairs Minister was partially corrected by his successor, Yashwant Sinha.

As for Pakistan, the outgoing Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, took bold initiatives: he could not be blamed if the desired results could not be achieved. What, however, stood out was the latest initiative resulting in the Vajpayee-Musharraf joint statement of January 6, and the road map worked out by the two Foreign Secretaries for the period till August.

As regards SAARC, New Delhi's supportive stand crystallised at — or just before — the Islamabad summit in January. When Pakistan chose not to make the economic issue a hostage to bilateral problems with India, Kashmir in particular, New Delhi shed its earlier hesitations. As a result, there is a promise of a new era in the region, what with the concrete steps, first, for preferential trade and, then, for free trade taken in quick succession. It may take longer than was visualised at Islamabad for the desired results to materialise, but the SAARC nations, notably India and Pakistan, had taken the right course.

Now China. After the setback in the Sino-Indian relations in 1998, Beijing had insisted on the untying of the knot by the party that had tied it. That done, the normalisation process moved forward rapidly. In particular, there was a jump in bilateral trade while other economic ties showed up. China's recognition of Sikkim as part of India, the decision to tackle the boundary issue at the high political level, close cooperation

between the two countries at the World Trade Organisation on issues arising from the new economic order, trilateral framework of cooperation among India, China, and Russia were the manifestations of the positive changes. The exchange of high level visits between the two countries put an end to the mutual sullenness.

In all the three cases, New Delhi will be required to do more of the same. And the CMP paves the way for it. That is clear from the specific references to the three cases. One, “dialogue with Pakistan on all issues will be pursued systemically and on a sustained basis.” Two, “trade and investment with China will be expanded further and talks on the border issue pursued.” Three, “the UPA government will give the highest priority to building close political, economic and other ties in South Asia and to strengthening SAARC.”

Falling in a different category are the CMP formulations on the U.S. and West Asia. The Government is to “pursue an independent foreign policy, keeping in mind the past traditions” and to “promote multi-polarity in world relations and oppose all attempts at unilateralism.” The expression of the desire for closer engagement and relations with the U.S., while maintaining the independence of India's foreign policy position on all regional and global issues, is followed by the commitment “to deepening ties with Russia and Europe as well.” “Independent foreign policy,” promotion of multi-polarity in world relations and opposition to “all attempts at unilateralism” are code words for correcting the tilt toward the U.S. that was seen as having resulted from the NDA Government's policies.

On West Asia, “India's decades-old commitment to the cause of the Palestinian people for a homeland of their own” is pointedly mentioned. But significantly, there is no reference to the previous Government's policy of strengthening ties with Israel, even though the Left parties had made known their strong views during the week-long discussions as also in their manifestos. Obviously, a

pragmatic line was preferred, given the importance of defence relations and the supply of highly sophisticated military equipment to India.

The new line on the U.S. in the CMP could be ascribed, to an extent, to the strong views of the Left. The manifesto of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), to cite one instance, was sharply critical of “U.S. super-power unilateralism,” “expanding role of NATO globally” and, of course, the occupation of Iraq. It lambasted the Vajpayee Government for its “strategic alliance” with the U.S., for its support to the Bush administration's National Missile Defence System, opposed even by some of Washington's allies, and for the establishment of an FBI office in India.

The Congress manifesto, though silent on U.S. occupation of Iraq, did take the Vajpayee Government to task for undermining the independence of the country's foreign policy “by not speaking up forcefully against the marginalisation of the U.N., [and] by not asserting India's position on world issues effectively”.

The U.S. could not have been unaware of the factors that were going to shape the UPA Government's foreign policy. The American Ambassador in New Delhi lost no time in seeking an appointment with Mr. Singh for a meeting that lasted an hour. The U.S. President, George W. Bush's telephonic talk with the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, though a protocol formality, too, was significant.

It is just as well that New Delhi has been prompt in dispelling misperceptions in Pakistan about the new Government's approach to bilateral problems. It has been made clear that Mr. Singh's pointed reference to the Shimla Agreement did not mean reiteration of subsequent decisions. Witness the categorical tone of the official statement: “We will abide by the framework of the Shimla Agreement and subsequent agreements and declarations and the January 6 joint Press statement when the Prime Minister of India had visited Pakistan and after his meeting with the President of Pakistan.” Two points are noteworthy. One, the change of Government in India will not make any difference to the pursuit of the peace process. Two, Pakistan, which had pinned high hopes on Mr. Vajpayee personally for a major push, needs to realise that there is national consensus in India over bilateral matters. Let the two sides get going with the agreed road map.

Natwar: Iraq decision hinges on UN terms

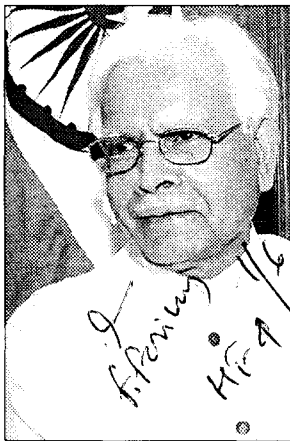
Vinod Sharma and
Saurabh Shukla
New Delhi, May 31

INDIA WILL weigh several key factors before embarking on any active engagement in Iraq after the US-led coalition transfers power to an Iraqi administration on July 1.

"Iraq is a complicated issue. We are very glad that the US and Britain have now tabled a resolution in the UN Security Council. They have come to the UN to find an answer. We have always said the UN has to be involved. They have also discussed it with us...we will have to see what is the fate of the resolution they have placed before the UN Security Council," External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh told *Hindustan Times*.

Asked whether India would play a proactive role in Iraq after July 1, Singh said: "We'll have to take into account many factors. First, the resolution has to be unanimous. It has to be to the satisfaction of the Islamic world and countries like India, which are not in the Security Council."

Emphasising New Delhi's "good relationship" with Is-



Natwar Singh
Straight talk

lamic countries, Singh said the sooner the situation improved in Iraq, the better it would be for the world.

After he assumed office, Singh received a call from US Secretary of State Colin Powell. Thereafter, he met US Ambassador to India David C. Mulford, who requested Singh to examine the draft resolution Washington had placed before the UN on Iraq.

Singh said India's peace talks with Pakistan would broadly follow the agreed time-table: "We will have frank discussions. We have

to tell them that no positive relationship can be one-sided, that we should work together without acrimony... that the new government is looking for a constructive and creative dialogue."

On General Pervez Musharraf's invitation to Congress chief Sonia Gandhi to visit Pakistan, Singh remarked: "If she were to ask me, or the PM were to ask, I would tell them that her visit will help Indo-Pak bilateral ties."

On South Asia, Singh mooted the idea of common security, economic and foreign policies for Saarc countries. "If we are able to achieve that, we'd leave Asean behind," he felt.

When asked about the Manmohan government's foreign policy approach vis-a-vis that of the previous regime, Singh said: "There are no fundamental differences...We will have an objective and independent foreign policy that will keep our vital interests in mind. And our national interests demand that we forge close ties with the US, our immediate neighbours, the EU, Russia, China, Japan, Germany and Africa."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES 4 1 JUN 2001

Back to Nehru, Natwar tells MEA

Nilova Roy Chaudhury in New Delhi

May 31. — An unofficial diktat has been handed down by foreign minister Mr K Natwar Singh to his deputies, ministers of state Mr E. Ahmed and Mr Rao Inderjit Singh, to read up on the classical foreign policy in the era of Jawaharlal Nehru, when the country was charting out an independent course that assumed the form of non-alignment. Secretaries in the ministry and other senior officials up to the rank of director are scrambling to get their hands on definitive books on what is being called the 'golden era of Indian foreign policy'.

When Mr Singh joined the foreign ministry as an official in 1953, Pandit Nehru straddled the world as a colossus. Mr Singh, now back in the MEA as the man in charge, has told his

deputies and senior officials to complete their education by reading up on Nehruvian foreign policy. Struggling to come to terms with the world as it has evolved 40 years after Nehru's passing — a largely unipolar world with the Cold War a thing of the past — officials smile wryly when asked to comment on

their new bed-time reading. And while nostalgia has not exactly overcome the corridors of South Block, what better way to complete an unfinished education than by reading from Nehru's *Selected Works*? Also highly recommended are excerpts from Nehru's letters to chief ministers, in which he spoke at length of foreign policy imperatives. Dr S Gopal's biography of Nehru in three volumes and even *Glimpses of World History* are being viewed as essential reading. Officials are also brushing up on their India-China relations from the *Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai* era, particularly as it is the golden anniversary of *Panchsheel* this year. IFS officials of more recent vintage have had to make do by reading the National Security Adviser Mr JN Dixit's books — *My South Block Years* and *Indian Foreign Relations*.



MEA officials have been asked to complete their education by reading up on Nehru's foreign policy...

COMPLICATED TANGO

Don't Turn The Clock Back On Foreign Policy

By SWAGATO GANGULY

Despite second generation Congress leaders doing a star turn at the polls, and despite Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's confidence that the 21st century will be India's, it has not quite been "ring out the old, ring in the new" as far as Cabinet formation is concerned. The Home portfolio to Shivraj Patil, who came a cropper at the hustings, is a clear indication that loyalty to the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty counts far more than youth, energy or ideas in the new administration. It looks as if similar considerations apply in the handing over of External Affairs to K Natwar Singh, literary dilettante, long-time family courtier, and tired old man. Salman Rushdie ribbed Jawaharlal Nehru in the *The Moor's Last Sigh* by referring to him as "Jaw-Jaw" Nehru; Natwar Singh has inherited some of the Nehruvian penchant for being voluble and scribbling copiously on every topic. Moreover, his writings imbibe the kind of Fabian socialism that underwrote domestic and foreign policy in Nehru's heyday.

Space for manoeuvre

In 1977 the Janata government, on assuming power after the Emergency, posed the important question whether, to paraphrase George Orwell, it paid to be more non-aligned with the West than with the Soviet Union. The Janata government did not last long enough to translate that insight into policy, but in a world shorn of the Soviet Union the Narasimha Rao government did, and the NDA government carried that process forward.

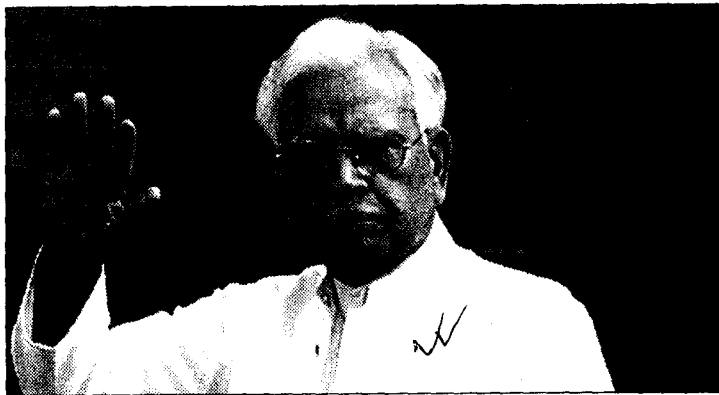
While the NDA had been mediocre to poor in most sectors of governance there was one area in which it shone relative to most past governments, and that was foreign policy. It was helped by the fact that foreign affairs was Atal Behari Vajpayee's forte. By the time Vajpayee relinquished power Delhi was friends with everyone who mattered — Washington, London, Paris, Moscow, Beijing, Tel Aviv, Teheran, Damascus, Ankara, Tokyo — as well as many who didn't. This despite nuclear blasts of 1998, which brought condemnation and international sanctions down on India. That is the essence of the foreign policy that middle-ranking power centres, such as Beijing or Moscow, follow, as it maximizes their space for manoeuvre. In 2004 Vajpayee even seemed close to solving India's most intractable security and foreign policy problem —

relations with Pakistan, and the dispute over Kashmir.

One hopes that the MEA under Natwar Singh, in a government supported by the Left, will not revert to the moralizing and hectoring approach of old. There was a time when budding foreign service aspirants were given to understand that the art of foreign policy consisted of passing eloquently worded resolutions at the UN. While being posted in plush Western environs, most resolutions should bash the West, while overlooking the misdeeds of the Soviets, Chinese, and so on. We parked ourselves on the losing side of the Cold War, which jeo-

guarding itself from retaliation by India's larger military through nuclear weapons and missile technology obtained from Beijing.

The Kashmir insurgency, therefore, could go on indefinitely while the insurgents have access to safe and inviolable sanctuary provided by Pakistan. Because Delhi, under Fabian socialist influence, was busy condemning the West's hypocrisies about human rights (while ignoring the fact that the principle is not even recognized in other parts of the world), Western capitals were content to stand back and watch Delhi stew in its own juice while they affirmed the principle of "self-



pardized essential Indian interests.

As is well known, the Cold War became "hot" in the Third World, where the actual battlegrounds were. But what is less generally recognized is that Kashmir too is one of those battlegrounds, and the bloody mess in that state is part of the legacy of the Cold War. That is not to negate the perspective that says that the rebellion was sparked by misgovernance, rigged polls, human rights violations and so on — liberals are quite right to insist that these ought to be set right. But the brutal reality is that setting these factors right will not in itself end the insurgency, unless it is also seen in a wider context.

Kashmir in context

That context, of course, is Afghanistan, where one of the last battles of the Cold War was fought. Soviet occupation of the country was dislodged by a Western-Islamist-Chinese alliance, whose staging ground was Pakistan. The foundation for that alliance was laid by adroit and assiduous diplomacy on Islamabad's part, which cultivated both the Chinese and Americans, while Delhi was busy organizing non-aligned meets and grandstanding at the UN. After Afghanistan was won, Islamabad transferred the template for the Afghan war to Kashmir, while safe-

determination of Kashmiris". JN Dixit, veteran diplomat and about-to-be National Security Adviser, was once told by a senior US state department official "we are only judging you by the standards which you claim yourselves". In other words, Delhi was being hoist on its own petard.

Can Delhi treat Moscow as its great white hope, as it had done in the past? Natwar Singh and IK Gujral, together with the Left establishment, tend to have warmly fuzzy feelings about Russia, dating back, no doubt, to the days of the 1971 Indo-Soviet friendship treaty. Moscow, however, is drawing close both to Beijing and to the West, and it would be folly to think it will sacrifice either for Delhi's sake. If Moscow and Delhi signed a friendship treaty in 1971, Moscow and Beijing signed one more recently, on 16 July 2001. Article 5 of this treaty states that both countries will desist from entering into agreements with third countries that damage the security interests of the other. In other words, Beijing has veto power over a Moscow-Delhi alignment.

Not that Delhi should be thinking of entering into anti-Beijing alliances, but it should have some cards to play should Beijing continue with its informal alliance with Islamabad against Delhi. Strategic analysts have talked about the "romantic triangle" between India, China and the US,

but it must be clearly understood that this is not romance of the mushy Bollywood variety, neither does it come off the Hindi-Chini *bhai bhai* block. This is romance as in *Dangerous Liaisons*, Pierre Choderlos de Laclos' chilling portrayal of 18th century French aristocratic social and sexual mores. Getting too close to Beijing would lead to Beijing taking Delhi for granted and ignoring its interests, as one might those of an old spouse; while taking its line from Washington would get Delhi embroiled in the clash of civilizations unleashed by Messrs Bush and bin Laden.

Third World uplift

Delhi must therefore enact a complicated tango where the simplistic dogmas of non-alignment are of little use — Zimbabwe and Chad are not going to help us out here. This is a game for adults, not for Don Quixotes or innocents abroad. The solutions won't be found by dipping into *belles lettres*, EM Forster or George Bernard Shaw; this is more John Le Carré territory.

Just as economic autarky and the licence raj are now acknowledged to be mistakes, it must be recognized that Delhi's enormous investments in G-77 and the non-aligned movement (NAM) have not paid off, either. Non-aligned nations remained non-aligned over India's gravest crises, whether 1962, 1971 or the Kargil war. Neither can NAM be accorded any extraordinary moral halo for those idealistically inclined: its greatest drawback is that it has nothing to say when despotic Third World rulers are brutal to their own citizens.

As strategic analyst C Raja Mohan has acerbically noted, while Delhi was sloganeering about Third World uplift many Third World nations actually uplifted themselves, through trade ties and security alliances, till the Third World came to be concentrated within the Indian subcontinent itself. It follows that the best India can do for Third World uplift is to improve its own prospects; trade and strategic ties are a game it must get into as well. When, therefore, the Left tells Natwar Singh and his team that Delhi must hew back to non-alignment, whatever that means in a world where the Soviet Union no longer exists, South Block may pretend to listen, in the interests of coalition *dharma*, and ignore the advice. Rather than perpetuating self-aggrandizing myths, Delhi must take note of correlations of forces as they exist in the real world, and move to secure its interests.

Natwar states that SAARC will be top foreign policy priority

India should focus on the developed world

When Natwar Singh took over as external affairs minister, many predicted a return to the Cold War style of diplomacy. They couldn't have been more right judging from his statement that SAARC will be his top foreign policy priority. Certainly, good relations with our neighbours are desirable and in our interest, but things have moved on since Natwar Singh's last stint in external affairs. He must realise that we have outgrown SAARC. New Delhi has consciously sought to de-hyphenate itself from Pakistan and has projected itself as a major player on the world stage. With its vibrant economy and its enormous resources in IT, India is no longer seen as a mere leader in South Asia. To give priority to SAARC would be to get bogged down with petty contentious issues involving our immediate neighbours. As we have seen in the past, every time New Delhi has made concessions to them in the larger interest of peace in the region, the response has been less than encouraging. Former prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Lahore trip was repaid with the Kargil invasion.

VIEW

With Nepal, a country crucially dependent on India economically, our relations have been less than stable. Anti-India rhetoric is a staple of Nepali politics as it is in Bangladesh and Bhutan. It would be wasteful to try and focus solely on changing these circumstances at the cost of other pressing international issues. Our focus should be on improving relations with Washington and the European Union. This would be of immense economic benefit to India at a time when we are trying to attract more foreign investment and increase our exports to these countries. Today, India's opinion is being sought at all major international forums. The ministry of external affairs ought to concentrate on building on the goodwill India is gaining in the developed world. To turn the foreign policy spotlight on the SAARC nations will ensure that we will miss the bus yet again.

Fresh thrust on W Asia

8/1 9-7 P. 10/1/2005
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 27. — Tucked away in the second last page of its 24-page agenda for governance, the Common Minimum Programme, is the UPA's outline of the new foreign policy priorities.

In a statement that is likely to cause some concern in Tel-Aviv, the CMP commits itself to giving a fresh thrust to "traditional ties with West Asia". The UPA government reiterates "India's decades-old commitment to the cause of the Palestinian people to a homeland of their own." While that has traditionally been India's stated position, it has recently veered away from initiating resolutions condemning Israel in the UN.

The CMP speaks of pursuing "an independent foreign policy keeping in mind its past traditions," a seeming throwback to the era of non-alignment, except in this case it would oppose "all attempts at unilateralism," clea-

ly aiming at the USA.

The agenda said the government, even as it pursued closer engagement in its relations with the USA, would maintain the independence of India's foreign policy on all regional and global issues. The UPA was committed to deepening ties with Russia and Europe as well.

The highest priority, the agenda says, would go into building closer political, economic and other ties with its neighbours in South Asia and to strengthening the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. In particular, attention would be paid to regional projects in the area of water resources, power and ecological conservation.

Dialogue with Pakistan on all issues would be pursued systematically on a sustained basis. The UPA will support peace talks in Sri Lanka that fulfilled the legitimate aspirations of Tamils and religious minorities within the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. Outstanding issues with Bangladesh will also be resolved.

চিন, পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক নিয়ে ব্রজেশের পরামর্শ চান মনমোহন

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

২৬ মে—প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ জে এন দীক্ষিতকে জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টার পদে নিযুক্ত করলেও পাকিস্তান ও চিনের সঙ্গে ভারতের দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের উন্নতি সাধনে প্রাক্তন উপদেষ্টা ব্রজেশ মিশ্রর সাহায্য নেবেন। নতুন সরকারের এই সিদ্ধান্তের কথা গত কালই প্রধানমন্ত্রী ব্রজেশ মিশ্রকে জানিয়েছেন। ব্রজেশ ইস্তফা দিয়ে গত কাল প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে দেখা করেন। সেই বৈঠকেই প্রধানমন্ত্রী তাঁকে বলেন, 'এই সরকার নতুন হলেও বিভিন্ন রাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের বিষয়টিতে ধারাবাহিকতা থাকবে। বিগত সরকারের উদ্যোগের ধারাবাহিকতা এই সরকার বহন করে এগিয়ে যাবে। আর সে কাজে ব্রজেশকে এখনও সরকার ব্যবহার করতে আগ্রহী।'

মনমোহনের এই দৃষ্টিভঙ্গীতে মুগ্ধ হন ব্রজেশ। তিনিও প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে বলেন, দেশের নিরাপত্তার স্বার্থে সব রকম সাহায্য করতে তিনি প্রস্তুত। মনমোহন-ব্রজেশ দুজনেই এক মত হন যে বিদেশনীতি রূপায়নের প্রক্ষে কংগ্রেস-বিজেপি-বাম বিতর্ক অর্ধহীন। গত পাঁচ বছর ধরে ব্রজেশ মিশ্র বিদেশনীতি রূপায়নের প্রক্ষে বিশেষ ভাবে সক্রিয় ছিলেন। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা কন্ডোলিজা রাইসের সঙ্গে তাঁর ব্যক্তিগত বন্ধুত্ব গড়ে ওঠে। তিনি ব্রজেশকে প্রায়ই ফোন করেন। একই ভাবে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের প্রিন্সিপাল সেক্রেটারি তারিক আজিজের সঙ্গেও ব্রজেশের ব্যক্তিগত সম্পর্ক গড়ে উঠেছিল।

সম্প্রতি অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর সঙ্গে পারভেজ মুশারফের মৈত্রী স্থাপনের নেপথ্যে ব্রজেশ গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা নিয়েছিলেন। এ বার বিদেশমন্ত্রী হয়েছেন নটবর সিংহ। অন্য দিকে জে এন দীক্ষিত হলেন নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা। মনমোহনের নির্দেশ, দুজনেই ব্রজেশের কাছ থেকে যেন বিগত সরকারের কাজকর্ম সম্পর্কে 'ত্রিফিং' নেন। নটবর সিংহ প্রাক্তন বিদেশমন্ত্রী যশবন্ত সিনহার সঙ্গে কথা বলতে উৎসাহী। না হলে ব্রজেশের সঙ্গে কথা বলতেও তাঁর আপত্তি নেই। পারভেজ নিজে প্রথমে প্রধানমন্ত্রী এবং পরে সনিয়া গাঁধীর সঙ্গে ফোনে কথা বলেন।

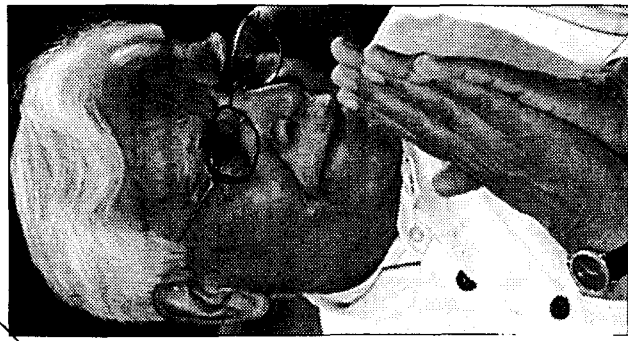
সরকারের সিদ্ধান্ত অনুসারে ভারত-পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে বিদেশ সচিব পর্যায়ে আলোচনা শুরু হবে ১০ জুন। দিল্লিতে এই শীর্ষ বৈঠক শুরু হওয়ার আগে পরমাণু ক্ষেত্রে আস্থা বৃদ্ধি ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের জন্য দু'দেশের বিশেষজ্ঞদের বৈঠক হবে। জুলাই-আগস্টে বিদেশমন্ত্রীদের বৈঠক হবে কাশ্মীর নিয়ে। বৈঠকের পর দু'দেশের সম্পর্ক কোন দিকে মোড় নিচ্ছে দেখে প্রধানমন্ত্রী স্তরে আলোচনা হবে।

চিনের সঙ্গে সীমান্ত বিরোধ মীমাংসার জন্য দু'দেশের বিশেষ প্রতিনিধিদের বৈঠক হওয়ার কথা জুন মাসে। চিনের মন্ত্রী দাই দিন গুয়োর সঙ্গে দু'রাউন্ড আলোচনা সেরে ফেলেছেন ব্রজেশ। ১০ থেকে ১৫টি সীমান্ত এলাকা নিয়ে বিতর্ক রয়েছে। মধ্য সেপ্টেম্বরের মানচিত্র বিনিময় হয়েছে। পশ্চিম সেপ্টেম্বরের মানচিত্র বিনিময় হওয়ার কথা। তবে পূর্ব সেপ্টেম্বর নিয়ে এখনও অনেক বিতর্ক আছে। এই সেপ্টেম্বরের ভিতরই আছে অরুণাচল প্রদেশের সীমান্ত বিতর্ক। তবে ভারতে সিকিমের অন্তর্ভুক্তি চিনের সরকারি মানচিত্রে এ বছর বদলে দেওয়ায় কূটনৈতিক পরিস্থিতি আরও ইতিবাচক হয়ে উঠেছে। অতীতে নটবর সিংহ চিনে ভারতের রাষ্ট্রদূত ছিলেন। তাই মনমোহনের আশা, এ কাজ সম্পূর্ণ করতে অসুবিধা হবে না।

জে এন দীক্ষিত পাকিস্তান, শ্রীলঙ্কা ও বাংলাদেশের রাষ্ট্রদূত ছিলেন। শুধু তাই নয়, ১৯৯২ সালে নরসিংহ রাও জমানায় যখন প্রথম ভারত-ইজরায়েল সম্পর্কের বরফ গলতে শুরু করে, আর্থিক নিষেধাজ্ঞা ভারত প্রত্যাহার করে নেয়, তখন দীক্ষিত ছিলেন বিদেশ সচিব।

তাই বাম নেতৃত্ব যতই বিরোধিতা করুক, সরকার ইজরায়েলের সঙ্গে ভারতের সম্পর্ককে নষ্ট করবে না। বিশেষত নিরাপত্তার প্রক্ষে ইজরায়েলের কাছ থেকে এখন প্রচুর নিরাপত্তা অস্ত্র ও সামগ্রী কিনছে। এ ব্যাপারে রাশিয়ার পরই ইজরায়েলের স্থান। তাই প্যালেস্টাইন-ইজরায়েল সাবেকি বিবাদের প্রেক্ষিতে ভারত ইজরায়েলের সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক নষ্ট করতেও রাজি নয়। তবে এত দিন বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের এই বিষয়গুলি মূলত পরিচালিত হত প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় থেকেই ব্রজেশের মাধ্যমে। নটবর সিংহ বিদেশ মন্ত্রক থেকেই বিষয়টি নিয়ন্ত্রণ করতে সচেষ্ট। দীক্ষিতের ভূমিকা থাকলেও তাঁকে রাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রীর মর্যাদা দেওয়া হয়েছে যাতে তিনি নটবর সিংহকে ছাপিয়ে না যান। ব্রজেশ শুধু নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টাই নন, প্রিন্সিপাল সেক্রেটারিও ছিলেন। তাঁর ছিল পূর্ণমন্ত্রীর মর্যাদা। নটবর-দীক্ষিত যাতে সমন্বয়ের সমস্যা না হয় সে ব্যাপারেও প্রধানমন্ত্রী যথেষ্ট সতর্ক।

27 May 2004



Singh: Focus on neighbours

New Order summons to Saarc envoys

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, May 25: Foreign minister Natwar Singh has "summoned" the heads of Indian missions in all the South Asian countries to the capital for consultations, indicating that top priority is being accorded to mending and strengthening ties with the neighbours.

Singh will meet the envoys to the Saarc nations between May 31 and June 1. The gesture puts to rest any misgivings the neighbours might have had about the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government's attitude towards them. At least two, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, were keen to send "special envoys" to gauge the attitude of the new

establishment. "The meeting between the external affairs minister and the heads of missions will help to review the status of our relations with these countries and to give a fresh impetus to our diplomatic efforts there," foreign ministry spokesperson Navtej Sarna said announcing the meeting this evening.

This will be Singh's first interaction with the ambassadors and high commissioners posted in different parts of the world. His predecessor Yashwant Sinha had begun his tenure by visiting South Asian neighbours the Maldives and Sri Lanka to stress on good bilateral ties.

Singh might hold consultations with Shiv Shankar Menon,

the high commissioner in Islamabad, as part of the current exercise. It is unlikely that there would be any fundamental shift in India's position vis-a-vis Pakistan, especially on the peace process initiated by the Vajpayee government and backed by the Congress.

The first to land in Delhi was Shyam Saran, ambassador to Nepal. Saran, who arrived this afternoon, was expected to hold a series of meetings with Singh and other senior officials in South Block over the next few days.

Nepal is strategically critical for India. Delhi considers the constitutional monarchy and the democratic forces the two main pillars of stability in the country. But over the past two years, the

two have been at loggerheads and a third force — the Maoists, who pose a serious threat to Nepal's stability — has been gaining ground.

The democratic forces, agitating for almost a year against the king's attempt to take up powers from the elected representatives, believe India, a key player in the country, should use its leverage with the king and force him to restore democracy.

Relations between India and Bangladesh have gone through many ups and downs in the recent past. The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party hopes that the Congress-led alliance would be more sympathetic towards Dhaka than the National Democratic Alliance. But officials feel

there might not be much improvement in ties till Bangladesh shows a willingness to take care of India's concerns, particularly insurgents operating from Bangladeshi territory.

On the other hand, relations with Sri Lanka — both on the political and the economic levels — have been improving steadily over the past few years. Now Colombo wants Delhi to play a more active role in the peace process with the Tamil Tigers, but India has so far maintained a distance.

Ties with tiny Bhutan and the Maldives have by and large remained problem-free. But after the consultations, Singh might identify some special areas where he could ask for greater cooperation.

Foreign policy not tied to doctrine or dogma: Natwar Singh

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, MAY 24. "Our foreign policy and diplomacy is not tied to any doctrine or dogma. We take decisions keeping in mind our vital national interests," the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, said at his South Block office today.

It had been "our endeavour" and will be so in future to have "close relations with the United States of America, the European Union, Russia, China, Japan, all countries in the ASEAN, the Islamic world, Africa... [the] Caribbean, Latin America, Canada, of course, [and the] United Kingdom," he said soon after taking charge as the new External Affairs Minister.

Mr. Singh, who did not take questions, promised that the process of having good neighbourly and cordial relations with all the SAARC neighbours would continue. Referring to the statement made by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, that the process of dialogue with Pakistan would continue, he said: "We will further strengthen, widen and deepen our relations with Pakistan."

"The bedrock of our bilateral relations with Pakistan is the Shimla Agreement... and other subsequent agreements and declarations. I myself served as Ambassador to Pakistan... so I have personal knowledge of the complexities and subtleties of Indo-Pakistan relations," he said.

The Minister dwelt at considerable length on bilateral ties



The External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, at his South Block office in New Delhi on Monday after taking charge. — Photo: Shanker Chakravarty

with China, pointing out that "our relations are problem-free except for the border question, but a mechanism has been set up for addressing that problem."

"The breakthrough in Sino-Indian relations came in December 1988 when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi paid a historic visit to China... subsequent governments [like] that of P.V. Narasimha Rao have carried the process further and this is a development which we welcome," Mr. Singh said, signalling continuity in the China policy.

"I personally began my diplomatic career in China in the mid-1950s and it is to be noted

that in the 2000 years of our contact there has been only one conflict and we attach importance to the Panchsheel [principles]. I look forward to intensifying our relations with the People's Republic of China."

India's relationship with the U.S., he said, was multifaceted. "They are two great democracies. It is in our interest and their interest and in the interest of the world community that relations between India and the U.S. should be on a steady course and not episodic."

Calling for sustained goodwill and cooperation between India and the U.S., Mr. Singh

made a pointed reference to the larger Indian community living there and the fact that it had made a place for itself in the American establishment. This was a development that India welcomed.

Mr. Singh did not forget to mention India's relationship with the Islamic world that went back many centuries. Of the 1.3 billion Muslims in the world, India had the second largest Muslim population after Indonesia.

"We greatly value our relations with our Islamic friends. There are over 50 countries whose religion is Islam. A large number of our people work and prosper in West Asia..."

Pointing out that the foundations of India's foreign policy were laid by Jawaharlal Nehru even before 1947, Mr. Singh said that India's voice was heard with great respect even though it was not a powerful country in those days.

"It may be unfashionable to say so but the moral authority and weight that India carried counted a great deal...", he said adding that the national consensus on foreign policy had, "broadly speaking", survived in the last 57 years.

Mr. Singh said the power and influence of the media was much less when he joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1953. "Now, the intrusion of the media is a fact of life, it is irreversible. And we need your understanding and cooperation."

Neighbourhood routes and maps

MANIFESTOS and vision statements of major political parties have been put in the public domain in weeks gone by. Domestic, economic and political issues are inevitably matters of higher priority than foreign policy when the country is in election mode. Even otherwise, the focus in foreign policy in recent years has been on issues like managing India's and Pakistan's nuclear weaponisation, countering cross-border terrorism, coping with the processes of globalisation, some of which adversely affect India, and so on.

Structuring relations with the US and other global power centres, bringing back Indo-Pak relations on track, formulating our response to developments in Afghanistan and Iraq have been other issues of active interest. In the process we have not taken note of an emerging trend of political instabilities and structural uncertainties affecting practically all the countries in our immediate neighbourhood.

The Congress Agenda on Foreign Policy states that it will allocate the highest priority to nurturing and expanding relations between India and its neighbours in all respects. The document containing the agenda proceeds to state that the Congress, if it comes to power, will strengthen and expand the activities of SAARC to make it an effective regional organisation. The NDA agenda expresses similar intentions.

This vision for regional stability is realisable only if minimal levels of internal cohesion and domestic harmony exist in the countries of the SAARC region, and in countries like Afghanistan and Myanmar which abutt on South Asia. (These two countries are also a bridge for India to Southeast Asia and to West and Central Asia.) Ground realities, however, pose a challenge. Each country in the SAARC region is going through a particularly critical phase of internal political churning.



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Whichever government comes to power faces huge foreign policy tasks

■ J. N. DIXIT

In Sri Lanka, the elections, completed in April, have resulted in President Kumaratunga's party winning a larger number of seats than Ranil Wickremesinghe's. But her party has not got an absolute majority. She will, therefore, have to forge an alliance with other Sinhala parties to acquire political stability for her government. They in turn will demand that peace negotiations with the Tamils, led by the LTTE, should be subject to what can only be described as some fundamental Sinhalese prejudices.

Also, Muslims of the country who previously identified themselves with the Tamil community, because they were Tamil speaking, have over the last decade

the Tamils and the Sinhalese could have critical ramifications for Tamil Nadu politics.

In Nepal, terrorist violence by the Maoist groups continues unabated. The political leadership is becoming progressively irrelevant. King Gyanendra has failed to establish a meaningful understanding with political parties to move back to democracy through elections. It is interesting that he emphasises stability rather than achieving stability through democratic processes. The Maoists are gunning for him as well as the political parties. The army is getting incrementally involved in giving security to the king, moving away from its institutional role of ensuring national

We have not taken note of an emerging trend of political instability and structural uncertainty affecting the countries in India's immediate neighbourhood

started claiming a separate ethno-religious identity. Matters are compounded further by a split in the LTTE, with the cadres belonging to the eastern provinces of Amparai and Batticaloa breaking away from the main group led by Prabhakaran. Though Prabhakaran's cadres have militarily started the process of defeating the eastern cadres, bitterness and mutual suspicion now characterise attitudes of the eastern Tamils towards the Tamils of Jaffna.

A significant development is the emergence of a separate political party of Buddhist monks with a "Sinhala First Approach" in their domestic political agenda. The discontinuation of purposeful negotiations between

defence. The police forces are no match for the Maoists. The political situation in Nepal could have a fallout in north Bengal, Bihar and northeastern UP.

It could also have ramifications in Bhutan, which still has a large Nepalese population. Bhutan itself is subject to domestic political pressures. The problem of Nepalese exiled from Bhutan still remains unresolved and is a cause for tension with Nepal. Separatist terrorist elements from the Northeast had established bases in Bhutan. While the king took decisive action last winter, the Bhutanese government has to remain alert to possible trouble from these groups.

The situation in Bangladesh is no different. Time has de-

scribed Bangladesh as one of the most dangerous countries in Asia. Even if one makes allowances for the magazine's penchant for pontificating about Asian governments and peoples, the fact remains that the internal law and order situation in Bangladesh is worrisome: There are reliable reports that the Bangladesh government has conveyed to diplomatic missions in Dhaka that it cannot guarantee their full security against criminal elements.

Extremist Islamic political groups are incrementally dominating Bangladesh's politics and they have made inroads into the armed forces and administrative services of Bangladesh. Political processes have become fractious and tense. In such a situation whichever party is in power can resort to the bogey of excessive Indian influence, thus generating tensions in bilateral relations.

Though the peace process is on with Pakistan, President Musharraf is subject to intense, pernicious pressure by religious extremists and terrorist groups within his own country. His cooperation with the US in countering terrorism and apparent willingness to talk to India on Kashmir are anathema to certain groups. Levels of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir remain a matter of concern for India.

Moving on to the extended neighbourhood, the ruling military council in Myanmar is not yet fully convinced about a full return to democracy. The situation in Afghanistan remains uncertain despite adoption of a constitution and the planned transition from an interim to permanent government based on an electoral process.

India is more stable and cohesive in comparative terms primarily because of its people's commitment to and faith in democracy. Whatever the results of the general elections, whichever government comes to power in New Delhi will have to cope with a very complex and tense neighbourhood.

USA, Pak hopeful of India's peace earnestness

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON / NEW DELHI, May 20 — As a Manmohan Singh-led government is all set to assume office, the US has said it looked forward to working with it on all aspects of Indo-American relationship and hoped that there would be continuity in the peace process between India and Pakistan.

"We are looking forward to working with them. We have a solid agenda with the Indian

people covering all aspects of our relationship. We see no reason why they should not continue to be pursued with the new government," the US Secretary of State, Mr Colin Powell, said.

He was addressing a joint press conference with his Pakistani counterpart, Mr Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, after their talks here yesterday.

Both Mr Powell and Mr Kasuri hoped the "road map" of peace between India and Pakistan would remain on track de-

spite the change of government in India.

"A road map has been worked out between India and Pakistan on their relationship which they have followed and which seems to be still very much active and we expect both sides will continue to walk down that path," Mr Powell said.

Mr Kasuri said Pakistan was committed to the peace process with India. "We discussed the situation emerging out of the new elections in India and



Mr Colin Powell

the Secretary felt — and I agreed with him — that in view of the work that has already been done and the good vibes



Mr Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri

that are coming from the leaders of the would-be government, we both agree these are positive signals and we need to

continue with that," Mr Kasuri said.

"I am certain that the government of Pakistan is committed to continuing the peace process and I look forward to the government of India doing the same."

Compliments for Yashwant

Mr Powell and the British Foreign Secretary, Mr Jack Straw, have complimented the outgoing external affairs minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha, on

the way the Vajpayee government worked to take relations with the two countries to new heights.

In farewell telephone calls by Mr Powell yesterday and Mr Straw on 17 May, the two leaders also praised the functioning of Indian democracy.

Mr Sinha also received a letter from the Nepalese Prime Minister, Mr Surya Bahadur Thapa. The Nepalese Prime Minister thanked him for his contribution to enhancing bilateral relations.

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Needed: regional focus

By C. Raja Mohan *J. from Paris*

FOREIGN POLICY everywhere is mostly about dealing with the neighbours. The enduring wisdom of this adage is hardly reflected in the manifestos issued by the two major political formations battling for power in the unfolding general elections. The manifestos of the ruling coalition, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party, and the Congress do indeed make brief references to China, Pakistan and South Asia. But there are no new ideas, let alone detail, on how they plan to deal with the major foreign policy challenges in the region that will immediately confront the new government, which should be in place in about three weeks. Instead, what we have is a mere list of countries with which India would improve relations and a couple of broader goals in the global arena.

The Congress talks about reinventing non-alignment even as it emphasises pragmatic engagement with all the major powers. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance pats itself on the back for its achievements and promises to make India a developed nation and a great power by 2020. This is part of the promotion of the feel good factor and the slogan of a "shining India." This preoccupation with big ideas and great power politics reflects the tradition in Indian foreign policy.

The history of Indian foreign policy, however, tells us that many great dreams of a larger role in world affairs came crashing down amidst the failures of regional policy and unending tensions with immediate neighbours. Jawaharlal Nehru's grandstanding on global issues was rudely shattered by the inability to handle the tensions with China in the late 1950s that erupted into a traumatic conflict in 1962. The problem of Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan has, over the decades, repeatedly flared up and sapped India's diplomatic energies. Despite the recent improvement in India's standing in world affairs, thanks to the arrest of its relative economic decline in recent years, the regional obstacles to a larger role on the global stage are real as ever.

India's diplomatic tasks in the next few years will be less about setting grandiose global goals. It will be more about managing the uncertainties in its immediate neighbourhood. To the extent that the Indian economy continues to perform well in the coming years, its weight on the global arena will steadily increase. But there is no question that India will acquire so

India's diplomatic tasks in the next few years will be less about setting grandiose global goals. It will be more about managing the uncertainties in its immediate neighbourhood.

much influence in the international arena that will allow it to shape the big issues. On the political front, the pragmatism of the BJP, now partly endorsed by the Congress, implies a multidirectional engagement of all the major powers. This necessarily prevents India from taking sides — say, between the U.S. and Europe on the big questions such as Iraq framed in terms of a tension between multilateralism and unilateralism.

India does not yet have the clout to tilt the scales of the great debates facing the world. India can indeed take diplomatic positions on these issues; but it will not be in a position to affect the outcomes. These are like bouncers that India will have to duck. That precisely is what China has done. Despite two and a half decades of reform that have propelled the Chinese economy into the top league, and a veto in the United Nations Security Council, Beijing has deliberately avoided getting caught in contentious global debates. Instead China has kept its head low, focussed on creating internal strengths and acquiring a decisive say in regional affairs. India, too, will have to follow a similar course in its foreign policy.

Whichever party takes charge in May, it will be plunged at once into historic negotiations with both China and Pakistan. They involve two of India's oldest and central national security problems — the boundary dispute with China and the extended contest for Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan. To his credit, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has taken the courage to address these long-standing problems, the resolution of which will bring immense advantages to India. But it is one thing to start a negotiation; it is entirely another to sustain it. Even more challenging is the formation of a strategy to successfully conclude these negotiations.

On China, India is in a happy situation where both the BJP and the Congress agree on the importance of negotiating with Beijing on the boundary dispute. This necessarily involves "give and take."

This is the real rub. Until recently, India had pretended that all that was

involved in the boundary dispute with Beijing was the vacation of territory occupied by China. India has now agreed to a framework, in which it has to work out for itself what it is prepared to "offer" to China in the disputed territory, and how much it is willing to "accept" in return. With the negotiations expected to resume within a few weeks after the new government comes to power, decisions on how to negotiate with China will need to be taken immediately.

The negotiations with Pakistan could be more daunting. The framework of negotiations agreed upon at Islamabad is indeed a fragile one. The signals from Pakistan suggest that if India is not seen as negotiating sincerely on Jammu and Kashmir, the peace process could begin to unravel. The bonhomie witnessed during the recent cricket series could then become another episode in the Indo-Pakistan relations. By July/August when the Foreign Secretaries and the Foreign Ministers will have met, the future of the peace process will indeed come under question. Assuming Pakistan holds down the levels of cross-border terrorism and India wants to negotiate "seriously," how much of a political flexibility can New Delhi show in its position on Jammu and Kashmir? Is India prepared for a failure of the peace process with Pakistan and the consequent higher levels of violence? These questions will have to be answered by a new government the very moment it assumes charge.

Even as it tries to navigate these big regional issues, relatively smaller ones but with huge implications will demand the new government's sustained attention. These include the unfolding political crisis in Nepal, the tension-prone relationship with Bangladesh, and the uncertain peace process in Sri Lanka. All these involve high stakes. They call for policy options that are at once creative and purposeful. They also demand a re-consideration of the many past premises that guided India's regional policy, in particular the role of external forces.

At the pan-regional level, the prob-

lem lies in promoting regional economic integration and leading the subcontinent towards prosperity. But is India prepared radically to overhaul its economic approach towards its neighbours? New Delhi also wants its neighbours to crack down on the sources of cross-border terrorism. But does India have a credible strategy of persuading the neighbours to act in favour of collective South Asian interest? These regional issues do not have the "sex appeal" associated with the rhetoric on "strategic partnerships" with great powers and the thundering in multilateral forums on the future of the global order. But they relentlessly impinge on the daily lives of India's citizens.

Negotiating the unpredictable swing bowling from the neighbours will be far more difficult than the pace and bounce from global issues. Further, India will not have the option of leaving regional affairs alone. A decision on whether to send troops to Iraq or not is far easier than finding ways to encourage the King of Nepal to accommodate his political opponents. Even more difficult is to get Dhaka to cooperate even in areas of evident mutual benefit.

There are issues in the region that raise complex questions about India's perception of its growing power and its application to get desirable political outcomes. It is relatively easy to shine in global diplomacy. All it needs are a few clever mandarins who can whip up the right-sounding phrases. But it does not usually involve the rest of the country and has no real effect on the lives of the people in the country. But regional diplomacy, more often than not, touches on core national security issues. It involves bringing different interest groups at home together in fashioning credible responses. It demands the courage to move away from entrenched political positions in order to achieve more important strategic goals.

Regional diplomacy demands complex trade-offs at home to negotiate the much sought after political goals with the neighbours. It is in the neighbourhood that the skills of the Indian diplomacy and the statecraft of its political class will be tested in the coming months and years. The world expects India to act in its own region and the management of the subcontinental affairs will be the yardstick by which India's political mettle as a rising power will be measured in the chancelleries of the world.

Opp not backing Pak

peace efforts: PM ✓✓

J. P. Prasad 14/4
Statesman News Service

BANGALORE, April 13. — The Prime Minister today lashed out at the Opposition for failing to support his government's peace initiative with Pakistan. When his party was in the Opposition, he said, it always supported whatever steps the government took for the betterment of the country.

Addressing a well attended election rally here today, he said that his government was determined to improve relations with Pakistan for the simple reason that it was in India's own interest. Highlighting the achievements of the NDA government, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said that it was determined to improve the standard of living of Indians. He decried the opposition's attempts to ridicule the progress made under his government and said: "our government has provided over 88 lakh jobs with more to come". At the same time, he cautioned the youth

against depending on government jobs too much. He suggested that the youth should look to science and technology, information technology and agriculture sectors for new job opportunities. Urging the people to give the NDA another term to complete the job that it had started, the Prime Minister said that a lot of work needed to be done on the agriculture front.

Repeatedly asserting that politics was not business, he said his government's dream was to make India a developed country. "Let us all work together to develop the country. If any party loses the elections, it should be treated as a loss for the party only, not the nation", he said without referring to any party by name.

He claimed that the minority community was "increasingly supporting" the BJP. "This is because we don't treat Muslims as a vote bank. We want to develop the country with them on our side. We see them as Indian citizens."

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ইরাকে সেনা পাঠাতে চাপ, এখনই নারাজ দিল্লি

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

১০ এপ্রিল: সেনা পাঠানোর ব্যাপারে আমেরিকা নতুন করে চাপ সৃষ্টি করলেও বাজপেয়ী সরকার এই প্রস্তাবে 'এখনও' রাজি নয়। তবে ভোটের আগে রাজি না-হলেও নতুন সরকার গঠনের পরে বিষয়টি নিয়ে আমেরিকার সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসতে রাজি হয়েছে ভারত।

তবে সে ক্ষেত্রে শর্ত দু'টি। এক, ইরাকের সার্বভৌমত্ব, দুই, পাকিস্তানের প্রক্ষেপে ভারতের কিছু দারি মেনে নিতে হবে আমেরিকাকে।

বাগদাদে মার্কিন বাহিনী একতরফা যুদ্ধবিরাতি ঘোষণা করে সুন্নি গেরিলাদের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসতে চেয়েছে। এই ঘটনায় আমেরিকার পিছু হটা দেখে ভারত নিশ্চিত, মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র সেনা পাঠানোর প্রক্ষেপে এখন আরও মরিয়া হয়ে উঠবে। বিশেষত নভেম্বরে আমেরিকার প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচনের আগে এই চাপ আরও তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে।

আমেরিকার বিদেশ দফতরের উপ-মুখপাত্র অ্যাডাম এরলি বলেছেন, ভারত এবং বাংলাদেশ ইরাকে ক্ষমতা হস্তান্তরের পর সেনা পাঠাতে উৎসাহী হবে। এরলি বলেছেন, ইরাক যুদ্ধে আমেরিকার অন্যান্য শরিকের সঙ্গে আমাদের নিয়মিত যোগাযোগ আছে।

এর বাইরেও ভারত ও বাংলাদেশের মতো নতুন দেশ সেনা পাঠাতে পারে। প্রায় এক উজ্জন দেশ এখনও খোলামেনে বিষয়টি দেখাচ্ছে।

আমেরিকা এ কথা বললেও ভারতের বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র নভতেজ সায়না এখনই এ বিষয়ে মুখ খুলতে নারাজ। তিনি বলেন, আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে আমেরিকার কোনও প্রস্তাব আমাদের কাছে এসে পৌঁছয়নি। প্রস্তাব আসার আগেই সরকার প্রতিক্রিয়া জানাবে কেন? আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে প্রতিক্রিয়া না-জানালেও বিদেশ মন্ত্রক সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, মে মাসে ভোটপূর্ব চোকার আগেই এ ব্যাপারে কোনও বকম আলোচনা করতে রাজি নয় ভারত। প্রাক্তন

বিদেশমন্ত্রক কানওয়াল সিবাল আজ বলেন, সেনা পাঠানোর পরে যদি ওখানে রক্তক্ষয়ী লড়াইয়ে তারা নিহত হন, আমেরিকার স্বার্থরক্ষায় ভারতীয় সেনারা প্রাণ দেন, তবে তার কী প্রতিক্রিয়া হবে তা ভাবা যায়! সামনাসামনি যুদ্ধে পরাস্ত হওয়ার ফলেই গেরিলা যুদ্ধের কৌশল নিয়েছে বিদ্রোহীরা। গেরিলা যুদ্ধ ইরাকে যত ভয়াবহ চেহারা নিচ্ছে, মার্কিন সেনারা যত পিছু হটেছে ভারতের উপর সেনা পাঠানোর চাপও তত বাড়ছে। ভারত এবং আমেরিকার সেনাবাহিনীর মধ্যে ঘনিষ্ঠ সম্পর্ক গড়ে উঠছে। ইরাক এবং আফগানিস্তানে গেরিলা আক্রমণ প্রতিহত করতে পাক্কা রণকৌশল কী হতে পারে, তা নিয়ে মিজোরামের জঙ্গলে আমেরিকা এবং ভারতীয় সেনারা বৌধ মজা দিচ্ছে।

কূটনৈতিক স্তরে দিল্লি আমেরিকাকে জানিয়েছে, পাকিস্তানের প্রক্ষেপে ভারতকে খুব বড় ধরনের কোনও ছাড় না-দেওয়া পর্যন্ত সেনা পাঠানোর বিষয়টি নিয়ে কেন্দ্র কোনও আলোচনাতেই বসবে না তাদের

সঙ্গে বেশ কয়েক প্রস্তাব আলোচনা করা হয়েছিল। সরকারের মধ্যে সেনা পাঠানোর প্রস্তাব নিয়ে মতপার্থক্যও ছিল। কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত সেনা না-পাঠানোর সিদ্ধান্তই গৃহীত হয়। আবার নতুন করে এই বিষয়টি নিয়ে আলোচনা শুরু করবে বলে আমেরিকাকে জানিয়েছে।

অতীতে বিষয়টি নিয়ে আমেরিকার সঙ্গে বেশ কয়েক প্রস্তাব আলোচনা করা হয়েছিল। সরকারের মধ্যে সেনা পাঠানোর প্রস্তাব নিয়ে মতপার্থক্যও ছিল। কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত সেনা না-পাঠানোর সিদ্ধান্তই গৃহীত হয়। আবার নতুন করে এই বিষয়টি নিয়ে আলোচনা শুরু করবে বলে আমেরিকাকে জানিয়েছে।

অটলের পাক নীতি 'ভরতনাট্যম নাচ', বলল কংগ্রেস

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১০ এপ্রিল— বাজপেয়ীর প্রসারিত 'মৈত্রীর হাত' এবং ভারত সরকারের পাক-নীতিকে 'ভরতনাট্যম নাচ' বলে উল্লেখ করে কংগ্রেস আজ তাদের বিদেশনীতি সংক্রান্ত কর্মসূচি প্রকাশ করল।

ইস্তাহার এবং অর্থনীতি সংক্রান্ত দিশাপত্র প্রকাশের পরে আজ তৃতীয় দফায় প্রকাশিত কংগ্রেসের এই প্রচারপুস্তিকার প্রায় অর্ধেক জুড়েই বাজপেয়ী সরকারের মার্কিন, পাক তথা বিদেশনীতিকে আক্রমণ করা হয়েছে। বলা হয়েছে, "বি জে পি তথা এন ডি এ সরকারের পাকিস্তান সংক্রান্ত নীতি বিভ্রান্তি এবং পরস্পরবিরোধিতারই এক দীর্ঘ আখ্যান। লাহোর হোক বা আগরা, এই সরকারের প্রস্তুতিপর্বে টিলেমি রয়ে গিয়েছে। যার পরিণাম হয়েছে ভয়াবহ। দূরদর্শিতার অভাবে লাহোরের পর কাগিল এবং আগরার পরে ভারত-পাক সম্পর্কের উত্তেজনা ফের মাথা চাড়া দিয়েছে। পাকিস্তানের মদতপুষ্ট সন্ত্রাসের মোকাবিলায় বি জে পি তথা এন ডি এ সরকার সম্পূর্ণ ব্যর্থ।...কয়েকদিন আগে হঠাৎই পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে শান্তিপ্রক্রিয়া শুরু করা হল। পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক স্বাভাবিক করা বাজপেয়ীর সব চেয়ে বড় কৃতিত্ব, এই দাবি একেবারেই অসত্য। প্রকৃত বাস্তব হল, প্রধানমন্ত্রী এবং তাঁর সরকারের পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে সম্পর্কের ক্ষেত্রে সঙ্কল্প, ধারাবাহিকতা এবং স্পষ্টতার অভাব রয়েছে।" উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানীকেও আক্রমণ করে কংগ্রেস আজ তার দিশাপত্রে বলেছে, "উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী প্রকাশ্যে বলেছেন, পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে শান্তি আনতে পারে একমাত্র বি জে পি-ই। কারণ তা হলে সেই প্রক্রিয়া দেশের সংখ্যাগুরু সম্প্রদায়ের কাছে গ্রাহ্য হবে। এই মন্তব্য মারাত্মক। দ্বি-জাতি তত্ত্বেরই এ এক অংশ মাত্র।"

নিরাপত্তা, প্রতিরক্ষা এবং বিদেশনীতি— কংগ্রেসের কর্মসূচি-পুস্তিকাটি প্রকাশ করেন দলের প্রবীণ নেতা নটবর সিংহ এবং প্রাক্তন বিদেশসচিব জে এন দীক্ষিত। দু'জনেই পূর্নায়ক্রমে বাজপেয়ী-আডবানীকে নিশানা করতে ছাড়েননি। দীক্ষিতের মন্তব্য, "বাজপেয়ী বাসে চেপে লাহোরে গিয়েছেন। তার ৩ মাস পরেই কাগিল হয়েছে। মুশারফ এসে গোল গোল কথা বলে দেশে ফিরে গেলেন। এখন যা হচ্ছে, ভারত-পাকিস্তান ক্রিকেট ইত্যাদি, তা আসলে ভরতনাট্যম। একে বিদেশনীতি বলা চলে না।" আর পাশে বসে নটবরের বক্তব্য, "স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক, বিদেশমন্ত্রক, মন্ত্রিসভার মধ্যে কোনও সংযোগ নেই। শুধুমাত্র একটা কাঠামো তৈরি করলেই কাজ চলে না।... সংসদে হামলার পর কী করা হয়েছে? ৫০ লক্ষ সৈনিক সীমান্তে মোতায়েন করা হল, যা দেখে মুশারফ মজা লুটলেন।"

ভোট জিতে ক্ষমতায় এলে কংগ্রেসের বিদেশনীতির রূপরেখা কী রকম হবে? কেমনই বা হবে পাকিস্তান, মার্কিন তথা বিভিন্ন দেশের সঙ্গে সম্পর্কের বিনিয়াদ। বলা হয়েছে, "১৯৭২ সালের ঐতিহাসিক শিমলা চুক্তির উপরে ভিত্তি করে পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে একটি কার্যকরী ও পারস্পরিক সহযোগী সম্পর্ক তৈরি করার দিকে নজর দেওয়া হবে। ১৯৯৬ সাল পর্যন্ত কংগ্রেস সরকার শিমলা এবং সংশ্লিষ্ট অন্যান্য চুক্তির যে আস্থাবর্ধক পদক্ষেপগুলি করা হয়েছিল, সেগুলির প্রতিও নজর দেওয়া হবে।" তবে পুস্তিকায় বলা হয়েছে, পাকিস্তানের দিক থেকে কোনও রকম আঘাতের মোকাবিলায় সতর্ক থাকা হবে।"

কংগ্রেস প্রস্তাবিত আস্থাবর্ধক পদক্ষেপ যে বাজপেয়ীর থেকে আলাদা হবে, সে কথাও ঝাঁজ স্পষ্ট করে দেন নটবর, দীক্ষিত। নটবরের বক্তব্য, "কুটনীতির দরজা আমরা বন্ধ করতে চাই না। বাজপেয়ী যখন ৯৯ সালের ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসে বাসে লাহোরে যাওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছিলেন, তখন আমরা স্বাগত জানিয়েছিলাম। কিন্তু তার পরেই কাগিল হল।" সম্প্রতি মুশারফের উক্তি (কাশ্মীরই হল মূল বিষয়) উদ্ধৃত করে নটবরের দাবি, "ভারত সরকারের পক্ষ থেকে এটা বলা তো উচিত ছিল যে কাশ্মীর একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয় ঠিকই। কিন্তু ভারতের আঞ্চলিক সংহতি নিয়ে কোনও আলোচনা বরদাস্ত করা হবে না।" এর পাশাপাশি সরকারের মার্কিন নীতি নিয়েও আজ মুখর হয়েছে কংগ্রেস। "এন ডি এ তথা বি জে পি সরকারের মার্কিন নীতিও চিন্তাদায়ক। স্বচ্ছতার অভাব রয়েছে। মার্কিন উপ-বিদেশসচিব এবং ভারতের বিদেশমন্ত্রীর মধ্যে কয়েক দফা আলোচনা হয়ে যাওয়ার পরেও তার ফলাফল সম্পর্কে দেশবাসীকে অন্ধকারে রাখা হয়েছে।" কংগ্রেস আজ সরকারের অভ্যন্তরীণ নিরাপত্তা এবং প্রতিরক্ষানীতিরও সমালোচনা করেছে এই পুস্তিকায়। তোলা হয়েছে ৩ বছরে ২৪ হাজার কোটি টাকা প্রতিরক্ষা বরাদ্দ খরচ করতে না পারা, সন্ত্রাসবাদীদের কন্দহরে ছেড়ে দেওয়ার প্রসঙ্গগুলি।

Troubled Neighbours

699 *of course in* **Shining India can't ignore** *11-12*
problems in its backyard

It's perhaps just a reflection of the media-driven nature of our times. But so preoccupied is 'Shining India' with the ongoing cricket in Pakistan, the forthcoming elections in the country and the periodic claims and counter-claims about the state of the economy, that nothing else seems to matter. Which is why developments taking place in our immediate neighbourhood — from Sri Lanka to Nepal to Bangladesh — with potentially serious security and political implications, have received such little notice in this country. In the island republic, the victory of United People's Freedom Alliance (UNFA) in the parliamentary polls may have ended the political stand-off between president Chandrika Kumaratunga and prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe in favour of the former, but the prospects of peace are likely to suffer. The Janatha Vimukti Perumuna (JVP) — a key constituent of the UNFA — is known for its outright rejection of the peace process and total opposition to the idea of devolution, without which there can be no meaningful dialogue between the government and the LTTE. The recent split in the ranks of the Tigers will only further complicate matters.

In Nepal, there is no end in sight to the ongoing conflict between the monarchy and the Maoists. Indeed, the violence has, in recent days, witnessed a dramatic escalation, with non-Nepali nationals being made the target of Maoist attacks for the first time. This, combined with the mounting opposition pressure on King Gyanendra to call for fresh elections, means that the kingdom is faced with its worst political crisis in a long time. Meanwhile, Bangladesh remains a source of serious concern, both on account of rising fundamentalism and increased ISI activity. A moment's reflection will suggest that India cannot ignore the worsening security and political environment in its own backyard. Peace with Pakistan is no doubt a priority area and a hugely laudable objective, but it cannot be allowed to generate into the kind of monomania that it has become. The diplomatic challenge is not just one of working out a viable strategy for stabilisation and peace in the neighbourhood; it is also of building a political consensus at home on how best to protect the country's long-term interests and contain the fall-out of the potential trouble spots in the neighbourhood. For too long, India's foreign policy vis-a-vis its smaller neighbours has alternated between abrasive overreaching and sluggish lack of response. The need of the hour is to be proactive as well as discreet. But for that to happen, the media and its consumers must play their role. And that includes you, dear reader.

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NDA's foreign (non)policy

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AND so it has come to this pathetic pass that after six desperate years of wooing by Atal Behari Vajpayee, Jaswant Singh and Yashwant Sinha, the United States considers a nuclear rogue as its "Most Important Non-Nato Ally" (MINNA). Worse, the US secretary of state condescends to confer on us — the founder-member of the Non-Aligned Movement — the status of MINNA Second Class. That would make India to the US what the Trinamool Congress is to the BJP!

It was Pokhran II that began the unravelling of independence in India's foreign policy. The ganging up of the nuclear weapon powers against us meant that we would either have to stand up in splendid isolation (*Ekla chalo re*) or bend our knees before the insolent might of the N-5, who are also the P-5.

Jaswant Singh humiliatingly rushed wherever Strobe Talbott summoned him, begging and pleading that India be taken off the hook. So degrading was his performance that till date the NDA has not dared reveal the terms of the subsidiary alliance that Talbott imposed upon Jaswant — like some factor of the East India Company putting a Mughal subedar in his place.

Meanwhile, it took under a fortnight for Pakistan to enact its nuclear *nauwanki*. With both countries now put in the doghouse, a shameful competition started between the two as to who could beat the other in getting out of the kennel. Pakistan won that round within a week — when first the G-8 in Geneva and then the P-5 in New York pulled out the Kashmir Sword of Damocles, which had remained sheathed in the UN for 33 years since the war of 1965, and dangled it over India's head in the shape of a Security Council resolution pointedly referring to Jammu and Kashmir.

And to underline the point that India's rehabilitation in the international community depended on American tutelage, President Bill Clinton had the gall to include J&K in his list of "disputed areas" in his address to Parliament in the



In six years, India's status in the world has been grievously undermined

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

sacred precincts of Central Hall, an outrage never before permitted by any previous Indian government to any visiting foreign dignitary. The Talbott-Jaswant compact, however, ensured that Prime Minister Vajpayee kept his mouth firmly shut as genuflection towards Washington got indelibly inscribed as the first principle of the NDA's foreign policy.

Under the terms of this subsidiary alliance, India After NAM was permitted to call itself "Non-Aligned" but only provided it committed itself to the Superpower camp, just like the native princes of India, after William Bentinck, were permitted to call themselves "raja" but only provided they put their Raj in hock to the Angrez. So desperate was the Vajpayee dis-

dian delegation in Doha to can it.

On the morrow of 9/11, the NDA rushed in where angels fear to tread. Without so much as being asked, New Delhi pledged its heart and soul — and the sacred soil of Mother India — to the Americans. The Americans quietly spurned the offer. Pakistan, they knew, mattered much more to them militarily than India ever would. Thus the worst state-sponsor of terrorism became their closet ally in what they chose to call their "war on terrorism".

Anxious, nevertheless, to prove that New Delhi and Washington were *langotiya* companions in the war on terrorism, Vajpayee tried to interest the White House in Pakistan's role in the attack on the J&K Assembly and then on Parlia-

the NDA's tail between its legs and bullied it into pulling back its forces from the frontier.

Thus firmly catching the two nuclear-weapon armed neighbours by the ear, Washington brought Musharraf and Vajpayee to the negotiating table. Like errant but still recalcitrant schoolboys, the two signed on the dotted line, — but not before the NDA prime minister reneged on his "principled" stand that there could be no talks with Pakistan until (a) cross-border terrorism was ended and (b) the infrastructure of terrorism dismantled. The earnest of Pakistan's commitment was to be its acceptance of the expression "cross-border terrorism", a buzzword Jaswant Singh had altogether forgotten to include in the Lahore Declaration but which became the straw with which Vajpayee broke the Indo-Pakistani back at Agra.

Musharraf dug in his heels at Islamabad and rejected the expression. Vajpayee cravenly gave in. This provided Musharraf his opening to unambiguously delink the "freedom fighters" of J&K from the "terrorists" against whom the US-led "global war on terrorism" is allegedly being fought. The NDA is, therefore, left comforting itself with a 3-2 victory in the ODI cricket series. What a fall there was, my countrymen!

Musharraf, in his newly acquired avatar as Busharraf, has now become Target Number One for the Al-Qaeda. Like the French colonialists who honoured black Africans who killed other black Africans for the greater glory of France by conferring on them the title of "Legionnaire d'Honneur", Colin Powell has conferred on his erstwhile co-sponsor of the Taliban, Pervez Musharraf, the title of "MINNA" for his taking up the White Man's burden of America's war on Osama bin Laden.

South Block is, therefore, left red with embarrassment, green with envy, and white with surrender. Substitute orange for red, and you have the colours of the Indian flag. This is what the NDA has done to India's honour, independence and sovereignty.

The earnest of Pakistan's commitment was to be its acceptance of the expression 'cross-border terrorism'. Musharraf dug in his heels. Vajpayee cravenly gave in

pensation to keep the smile on the Yankee face that after our jawans had thrashed Pervez Musharraf's troops in Kargil, the NDA endowed the credit for ending the war to the wiggling given by Clinton to Nawaz Sharif.

Worse was to follow. The NDA commerce minister, Mura-soli Maran, spoke up for India and all developing countries in his brilliant opening address to the WTO ministerial meeting in Doha. Vajpayee happened to be in the US at the time. Like the British resident whispering a word in the raja's ear, George W. Bush told Vajpayee to shape up or ship out. Promptly word went to the In-

ment. Washington and the rest of the West demurred. So, to impress Cowboy Bush in his own idiom, the NDA government drew up a dramatic list of its "Twenty Most Wanted" residents of Pakistan, preliminary to cutting off air, train and bus links to Pakistan, recalling high commissioners (or getting them recalled), and mobilising the army to the borders.

Thoroughly alarmed at India opening this second front in the "war against terrorism" without American sanction, not one western government bought the NDA argument that Pakistan had sponsored the attack on the Indian Parliament. Instead, they firmly tucked

Foreign policy in Opposition poll manifestos

By K.K. Katyal

Some implied agreements, considerable disagreements — this is the sum-total of the view of the Opposition parties — conveyed through their election manifestoes — of the government's handling of external relations. The area of disagreement is wider on defence and national security issues.

Two other points stand out. One, references to the foreign policy are brief in the case of the two Communist parties and particularly so in the case of, Congress. This confirms the prevailing impression that the elections are being fought mainly on domestic matters. As such external relations and security issues have not attracted sufficient attention. Two, the Congress and the Left parties differ among themselves on some major aspects of these policies.

First, the area of agreement. The Congress favours dialogue with Pakistan on all issues including Jammu and Kashmir, expansion of trade and investment relations with China, engagement with the U.S. on scientific, technological, strategic and commercial cooperation. It emphasises the traditional bonds with countries such as Russia, Japan and the European Union. The CPI(M) is emphatic that the dialogue with Pakistan be pursued seriously, with an important rider — “without U.S. intervention.” It wants special attention to be paid to fostering close ties with China and special efforts to coordinate relations between India-Russia and China and expansion of

the scope of cooperation with Brazil and with Africa. Though it is not stated explicitly, for obvious reasons, it amounts to endorsement of the official stand.

At the same time, there are significant reservations. For instance, the Congress includes “relations with Pakistan” among the

and other non-aligned countries.”

On security and defence issue, the Congress stand now shows significant variations from the position it took in 1999. The party then shied away from expressing itself on India's nuclear status. It skirted this central point as it spoke of the need for ensuring that “nuclear weapons available with India and Pakistan are never used” and of the “joint responsibility for nuclear non-proliferation in the region” of India, Pakistan and China. The present manifesto is specific — “the Congress is committed to maintaining a credible nuclear weapons programme while, at the same time, it will evolve demonstrable and verifiable confidence-building measures with its nuclear neighbours.”

Missing now is the reference to the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan for a nuclear weapon-free and non-violent world order — which had ritualistically figured in the party documents ever since it was presented to the U.N. in 1988.

The Left, on the other hand, reaffirms its known categorical stand against nuclear weapons. The CPI(M), for instance, would like to “revert to nuclear policy of using nuclear energy for civilian and peaceful purposes,” provide “parliamentary sanction for moratorium on testing” and open “talks with Pakistan for de-nuclearised environment in South Asia.” The CPI, too, has taken this position.

The Congress, obviously, has moved towards the official line.

NEWS ANALYSIS

issues on which the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, had “displayed a singular lack of consistency and clarity.” The CPI(M) is sharp in its criticism of the Vajpayee Government's “pro-imperialist foreign policy” and wants it to be reversed. The party, the manifesto says, will work for “opposition to U.S. superpower unilateralism and the expanding role of NATO globally, ending the occupation of Iraq by the U.S. and its allies and strengthening the multilateral forums such as the U.N. to deal with all disputes between countries”.

The CPI, too, wants the tempo of peace talks with Pakistan kept up without “third party intervention,” unilateral actions of the U.S. opposed and the demand for immediate and total withdrawal of occupation forces from Afghanistan and Iraq pressed. The Congress is silent on these matters — barring an indirect reference. The Left parties emphasise the importance of an independent and non-aligned foreign policy and are of reviving the Non-Aligned Movement. The Congress merely says it will revive the “country's close ties with West Asia

বিদেশ নীতির অভিমান

নির্বাচনের আগে 'ফিল্ড' বাতাল যখন দেশের নভোমণ্ডল যথেষ্ট সুরভিত করিতে পারিয়াছে, এমন সময়ে জানা গেল, পাকিস্তানকে মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র 'ন্যাটো-বহির্ভূত মিত্র'-র পর্যায়ে অপ্রত্যাশিত স্বীকৃতি দিতে উদ্যোগী হইয়াছে। ইসলামাবাদ সফরকালীন পাকিস্তানের নূতন স্বীকৃতির এই ঘোষণা করিয়াছেন মার্কিন বিদেশ সচিব কলিন পাওয়েল। আসল কথা তাহা নহে। আসল কথা হইল, ইসলামাবাদে পৌঁছইবার মাত্র এক দিন আগেই তিনি ভারতে সফর করিতেছিলেন। সেই সময়ে ভারতীয় বিদেশ এই সিদ্ধান্তের পক্ষে যথেষ্ট চেষ্টা করিয়াছিলেন। অর্থাৎ এই বিষয়ে ভারতকে আমেরিকা আশে হইতে অবহিত করিবার প্রয়োজনও বোধ করে নাই। আশ্বাতের সহিত যুক্ত হইল অপমানের ছালা। পাওয়েল নিয়মমাফিক কতগুলি সাঙ্ঘনিক উচ্চারণ করিয়াছেন বলিয়াছেন ভারতের সঙ্গে এই মুহূর্তে আমেরিকার মিত্র-সম্পর্ক অত্যন্ত গভীর ও মূল্যবান। কিন্তু সাঙ্ঘনিকভাবে তেমন মিঠে সুর লাগে নাই, ভারতীয় কর্তারাও তাহা শুনিয়া বিশেষ উৎসাহিত বোধ করিতে পারেন নাই। ভারতীয় বিদেশ দফতর দুই দিন পরে জানাইয়াছে, তাহারা আশাহত।

এমন নয় যে, পাকিস্তানের সহিত আমেরিকার ঘনিষ্ঠতায় ভারতের বিস্মিত হইবার কোনও কারণ আছে। সাম্প্রতিক কালে সন্ত্রাসবাদ সংক্রান্ত বিভিন্ন প্রসঙ্গে দুই দেশের মধ্যে বেশ খানিকটা শৈত্য সৃষ্ট হইয়াছিল বটে, মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্টের তরফে ইসলামাবাদকে বেশ কয়েক বার কঠিন ভাষায় ভর্ৎসনা ও সাবধানবাণীও পাঠাইতে হইয়াছে তাহাও সত্য, কিন্তু ঐতিহাসিক ভাবেই পাকিস্তান আমেরিকার বিশেষ বিশ্বাসভাজন মিত্র, ভারতের সহিত বরং মার্কিন মিত্রতা হালের সুসমাচার। যতই মান-অভিমান চলুক না কেন, সেই মার্কিন-পাক প্রণয়-সম্পর্কে সত্যকারের কোনও ছেদ ঘটিবার কোনও ইঙ্গিত এখনও অবধি দেখা যায় নাই। বরং বিশ্বব্যাপী সন্ত্রাস-বিরোধী মার্কিন সংগ্রামে পারভেজ মুশারফ-অধীন পাকিস্তান আমেরিকার এক বিরাট সহায়, মুসলিম বিশ্বে পা রাখিবার জরুরি সোপান। পাকিস্তানের মূল্য আমেরিকার কাছে বাড়িতেছে বই কমিতেছে না। মুশারফের পক্ষেও যে কোনও মূল্য মার্কিন কৃপাদৃষ্টি অক্ষুণ্ণ রাখা ভয়ানক জরুরি। এক দিকে দেশান্তরে উগ্রপন্থী গোষ্ঠীর অনলস চাপ, অন্য দিকে ভারতকে প্রতিহত করিয়া নিজের অবস্থান অক্ষত রাখিবার জন্য মুশারফের পক্ষে যেমন বুশের

সাহায্য একান্ত দরকার, তেমনই দেশের অর্থনৈতিক অস্তিত্বের কারণেও মার্কিন কৃপাদৃষ্টি বিশেষ জরুরি। নিজের পায়ে কুড়ুল মারিতে তিনি কখনওই চাহিবেন না। সুতরাং পাক-মার্কিন মিত্রতা নূতন সংবাদ নহে, কেবল এক নিহিত সত্তোর প্রকাশ্য স্বীকৃতি মাত্র।

কিন্তু প্রকাশ্য স্বীকৃতিরও কিছু প্রত্যক্ষ অর্থ আছে নিশ্চয়ই। ভারতীয় বিদেশ দফতর স্বভাবতই এখন এই নূতন স্বীকৃতির অর্থসমূহের সন্ধান নিরত। পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে মিত্রতার এই প্রকাশ্য স্বীকৃতির ফলে পাকিস্তানকে মার্কিন সামরিক অস্ত্র-ভাণ্ডার ও সামরিক তথ্য-ভাণ্ডারের অনেক কাছাকাছি আনিয়া দিল। ইহার সহিত মার্কিন সামরিক সাহায্য, অস্ত্রশস্ত্র এবং প্রশিক্ষণও যে আরও সহজে ওয়াশিংটন হইতে ইসলামাবাদের দিকে প্রবাহিত হইবে, এমন আশঙ্কা প্রবল। সুতরাং, ভারতের চিন্তা বাড়িল। বিশ্ব-প্রেক্ষাপট-সূত্রে আমেরিকার সঙ্গে আবশ্যিক কূটনৈতিক ঘনিষ্ঠতাও বজায় রাখিতে হইবে, অন্য দিকে পাকিস্তান-প্রসঙ্গে এই 'মিত্র সুলভ' মহাশক্তিকে চরম সাবধানতার সহিত গ্রহণ করাও এই দেশের অলঙ্ঘনীয় ভবিতব্য। কিন্তু এখানে সমস্যার শেষ নহে, তাহার শুরু। প্রধান সত্য ইহাই যে, ভারতের সামগ্রিক বিদেশনীতি, বিশেষ করিয়া মার্কিন-নীতির ভিতরে অতিমাত্রায় পাকিস্তান-কেন্দ্রিকতার একটি প্রবণতা দৃশ্যমান। পাকিস্তান জন্মাবধি ভারতকে প্রধান প্রতিপক্ষ তথা বিপদ বলিয়া মনে করে ও ক্রমাগত সেই 'শত্রুতা' ভাঙাইয়া ইসলামাবাদ মার্কিন সাহায্য জোগাড়ে তৎপর। প্রসঙ্গ হইল, যে রাষ্ট্র আগামী দিনে বিশ্বের বৃহৎ শক্তি হইবার স্বপ্ন দেখিতেছে, সেই দেশ নিতান্তই একটি উপমহাদেশীয় শক্তির ন্যায় আচরণ করিবে কেন? পাকিস্তানকে আমেরিকা বিশেষ সুবিধা প্রদান করিলে নয়াদিল্লির অস্বস্তি হইতেই পারে, কিন্তু যাবতীয় কূটনৈতিক তৎপরতাকে নিছক সেই গোসার আবর্তে বাঁধিয়া রাখা আদৌ লাভজনক নহে। এশীয় স্তরে ভারতের যথার্থ প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী পাকিস্তান নহে, বরং চীন। বেজিং কিন্তু প্রতিবেশী কোনও দেশের নির্দিষ্ট লাভ-ক্ষতি লইয়া ভাবিত হইলেও প্রতিক্রিয়ায় কখনওই সরাসরি সেই ব্যাপারে মান-অভিমানের প্রকাশ ঘটায় না। বিশ্ব-শক্তির মর্যাদা লাভ করিতে হইলে কূটনীতিকেরা সেই স্তরে উন্নীত করিতে হইবে। পাকিস্তান বহুকালই দিল্লি-তাস খেলিতেছে। তুলনায় বহুগুণ বৃহত্তর শক্তি ভারত যদি পাকিস্তান-কেন্দ্রিক আবর্তে ফাঁসিয়া যায়, তাহাই হইবে নয়াদিল্লির আসল কূটনৈতিক পরাজয়। সাউথ ব্লক সতর্ক আছে তো?

India and the U.S.-Pakistan alliance

By C. Raja Mohan

New Delhi needs to develop a credible strategy to influence the American domestic debate on the implications of designating Pakistan a major non-NATO ally.

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THE TIMING and the style of the announcement by the United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell, last week to designate Pakistan a "major non-NATO ally" have broken the principle of "no-surprises" that has operated between New Delhi and Washington in the recent period. While this has upset India and undermined the mutual trust and confidence developed so painstakingly over some years, New Delhi's focus must remain riveted on the nature of the political bargain between Washington and Islamabad that underlies the American decision and its consequences for regional stability.

The U.S. President, George W. Bush, finds himself in an early and unexpected tight race for the White House with Senator John Kerry. With the rationale for the Iraq war now being closely questioned and the failure to finish the hunt for Al-Qaeda becoming an issue, Mr. Bush desperately needs a big "success" in Afghanistan. This political gift in an election year can only come from Pervez Musharraf, the President of Pakistan.

The General has agreed to mount unprecedented military operations in the South Waziristan tribal agency bordering Afghanistan. In return for extending the American war on terrorism on to Pakistan's soil, Gen. Musharraf would naturally want favours. As he plans to shed his uniform at the end of the year and still remain in effective control of Pakistan, Gen. Musharraf needs to shore up his position in the armed forces. The U.S., we can infer, has chosen to reward Gen. Musharraf personally and also show the Pakistani Army the benefits of pursuing American political objectives in Afghanistan. Is this a temporary marriage of convenience, or a lasting arrangement? Would it involve substantive transfers of military equipment to Pakistan? How would it influence the Indian security calculus?

The answers to these questions cannot be derived from the formal statements being issued by U.S. officials. They will depend on further bargaining between Washington and Islamabad and how the hunt for Al-Qaeda unfolds. Pakistan can be expected to string out these operations and extract maximum possible gains from the Bush administration, whose need to showcase the capture of a major Al-Qaeda leader would only increase with every passing week. There is no doubt that a new phase

has just begun in the complex triangular relationship among Washington, Islamabad and New Delhi.

India has three important interests to protect at this time. The first is to limit American arms sales to Pakistan to a modest level. The second is to ensure that Pakistan is not emboldened by the new alliance with the U.S. to revive its support to cross-border terrorism once summer begins in Jammu and Kashmir. The third is to ensure forward movement on the priority items in the bilateral agenda with Washington.

On the question of U.S. arms sales to Islamabad, India knows it cannot prevent all external inputs into the natural cycle of military modernisation that must soon take place in Pakistan. India is also aware that given the current nuclear balance in the subcontinent, minor variations in the conventional military balance do not have the kind of impact they used to in the past. India also has reason to be confident that its economic resources today outstrip those of Pakistan by a big margin and it can more than match American arms supplies to Pakistan.

Within this broad framework, however, India has every reason to argue in Washington that while it is prepared to live with a modest military modernisation of Pakistan, it will not accept arms transfers that threaten its security. India will also have to underline the dangers of emphasising military assistance to Pakistan at a time when the crying need in that country is for rapid economic modernisation and massive social sector reforms.

More important for India is the impact of designating Pakistan a major non-NATO ally on the current delicately poised peace process in the subcontinent. Given the desperate American need for Pakistani cooperation in the war against Al-Qaeda, it is not inconceivable that the U.S. will lose its stomach for pressing Pakistan against supporting cross-border terrorism in India. The U.S. might continue to verbally support the notion that there can be no double standards in the war against terrorism. But it is entirely possible that the Pakistani military establish-

ment might miscalculate that the alliance with the U.S. gives it the room to renew its support to terrorism on some pretext or the other.

That will be catastrophic for the peace process now under way between India and Pakistan. In his remarks to the *India Today* Conclave in the capital a few days ago, Gen. Musharraf suggested that the pause in Pakistani support to terrorism is a tactical one. His attempts to break out of the broad framework that was agreed during the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to Islamabad in January have already drawn strong comments from the Indian side. Gen. Musharraf's obsessive emphasis on Kashmir as the "core issue" with India and the renewed attempt to make the State a tripartite issue are in clear violation of the joint statement issued in Islamabad.

Equally disconcerting is the hint in Gen. Musharraf's statement that things could slide back to square one in Jammu and Kashmir if Pakistan does not gain satisfaction from the talks with India scheduled for May/June. An assessment, mistaken or otherwise, in Pakistan that the external environment for the peace process has shifted in favour of Islamabad, could turn out to be disastrous. It is in that context the American move to designate Pakistan a major non-NATO ally is singularly ill timed.

For years now, the U.S. has sought to promote a peace process between India and Pakistan. Just when it seemed poised for a take-off, the Bush administration has taken a step that could undermine it. India can and must warn the U.S. about the dangers of its new policy towards the region. Whether its arguments are heard in Washington or not, India will now have to fully prepare itself for a possible disruption of the peace process after the summer months. It will have to develop the necessary military options to deal with renewed terrorism from Pakistan. After years of deep distrust about the American approach to problems between India and Pakistan, New Delhi was just beginning to feel comfortable with the notion that the U.S. could in fact be a

facilitator in this incipient peace process. If it appears to tilt in favour of Pakistan one more time, the U.S. will have squandered all leverage in India as an honest broker.

Finally, the U.S. has compounded the problem by offering India, as an after thought, the similar status of a "major non-NATO ally". New Delhi would not want to compete with Pakistan for political equivalence in Washington. India has its own agenda of bilateral relations with the U.S. But American assertions that it will pursue independent relations with India and Pakistan and that they do not constitute a zero sum game are beginning to draw a yawn in New Delhi. There is growing unease in the South Block that the agenda already agreed with the White House is beginning to lose steam. American bureaucracy is dragging its feet in the implementation of the "next steps in strategic partnership" that were outlined with some fanfare in January by Mr. Bush and Mr. Vajpayee. Under this agreement, the U.S. was to ease Indian access to high technologies in return for the Indian commitment to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

While the U.S. seems eager to forgive Pakistan's transgressions on the non-proliferation front and bestow it with favours, it finds many excuses in not moving forward on the promise of liberalising the transfer of advanced technologies to India. Concerns about regional stability and the alleged implications for Indo-Pakistan military balance are being used in Washington to slow down bilateral cooperation in missile defence that had been agreed in the past. Demonstrating quick and tangible progress on the bilateral agenda has now become more urgent than ever for the U.S. to retain some political credibility in New Delhi.

Despite its preoccupation with the elections, the Government must find ways to push this three-point agenda in the coming weeks with Washington. Given the uncomfortable timing of the U.S. decision to formally revive the alliance with Pakistan, the Government will be tempted to posture for domestic consumption. That will not help manage the potentially significant consequences of the American move. New Delhi needs to clearly signal its concerns to the Bush administration and develop a credible strategy to influence the American domestic debate on the implications of designating Pakistan a major non-NATO ally.

দু'দিন পরে দিল্লি বলল, আমরা হতাশ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২০ মার্চ— আমেরিকা পাকিস্তানকে নেটো-বহির্ভূত মিত্র হিসাবে বিশেষ স্বীকৃতি দেওয়ার দু'দিন পরে সরকারি ভাবে ভারত এই ব্যাপারে 'হতাশা' প্রকাশ করল। নয়াদিল্লির বক্তব্য, ওয়াশিংটন যে পাকিস্তানকে এই স্বীকৃতি দিচ্ছে, তার কথা ভারতকে আগে জানানো হয়নি। বিদেশ মন্ত্রক আজ এক বিবৃতিতে বলেছে, “আমরা দেখেছি, ইসলামাবাদে মার্কিন বিদেশসচিব কলিন পাওয়েল বিবৃতি দিয়েছেন পাকিস্তানকে সম্ভাব্য নেটো-বহির্ভূত মিত্র হিসাবে স্বীকৃতি দেওয়ার ব্যাপারে।... এটা হতাশজনক যে উনি (পাওয়েল) আমাদের মার্কিন সরকারের এই সিদ্ধান্তের কথা জানাননি।” অন্য দিকে, নাগপুরে উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানীকে আজ এই বিষয়ে প্রশ্ন করা হলে তিনি বলেন, “এই ব্যাপারে আমাদের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী আলাদা। পাকিস্তানের বিষয়ে আমেরিকার যে বিদেশনীতি, তার সঙ্গে আমাদের বিদেশনীতির ফারাক রয়েছে।” উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী আজ আবার নতুন করে মনে করিয়ে দিতে চেয়েছেন, ভারত-মার্কিন সম্পর্ক এখন আগের চেয়ে মজবুত হলেও বিভিন্ন বিষয়ে দু'টি দেশের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গীর মধ্যে গুরুতর পার্থক্য আছে।

কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার আমেরিকার আচরণে হতাশা ও ক্ষোভ প্রকাশ করলেও বিরোধী কংগ্রেস তাতে সন্তুষ্ট নয়। কংগ্রেসের তরফে প্রাক্তন বিদেশপ্রতিমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ বলেছেন, “খুবই দুঃখের ব্যাপার, আমাদের বিদেশ মন্ত্রক এটা জানত না। যদি কলিন পাওয়েল দিল্লিতে না-আসতেন, তাহলে অন্য কথা। কিন্তু দিল্লিতে এসেও তিনি কিছু জানাননি। অথচ ভারত সরকার বলছে, মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র আমাদের কৌশলগত পার্টনার। তা হলে বাজপেয়ী সরকারের এই দাবির কী সত্যতা? দেশের মানুষকে এটা বলতে হবে।” প্রাক্তন বিদেশসচিব জে এন দীক্ষিত অবশ্য সরকারি হতাশার অংশীদার নন। তিনি বলেন, “আমি এই হতাশার সঙ্গে একমত নই। কেন আমরা হতাশ হব? বড় জোর বলা উচিত ছিল যে মার্কিন আচরণে আমরা অবাক। আসলে আমরা নিজেরাই একটা প্রত্যাশা তৈরি করে নিই, তার পর সেই অনুযায়ী ঘটনা না ঘটলে হতাশা ব্যক্ত করি। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র কোনও ভুল কাজ করেছে বলে আমি মনে করি না। বিদেশনীতির প্রাথমিক শর্তেই রয়েছে যে একটি দেশ নিজের স্বার্থেই চলবে। এবং দ্বিতীয়ত, বিভিন্ন দেশের মধ্যে সমঝোতায় গোপনীয়তা থাকবে। সে দিক থেকে তো আমাদের কিছু বলার নেই।”

অস্বস্তি থাকছেই

এত সব বললেও ভোটের মুখে মার্কিন সরকার পাকিস্তানকে যে বিশেষ স্বীকৃতি দিয়েছে, তাতে স্পষ্টতই বেকায়দায় পড়ে গিয়েছে নয়াদিল্লি। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে ভারতের সম্পর্ক সাম্প্রতিক কালের মধ্যে প্রভূত উন্নতি করেছে বলে দাবি করে, কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার একে নিজেদের বিদেশনীতির সাফল্যের উদাহরণ হিসাব দেখাতে চেয়েছে। নয়াদিল্লিতে প্রধানমন্ত্রী-বিদেশমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে বৈঠক করে ইসলামাবাদ উড়ে গিয়েই মার্কিন বিদেশসচিব পাকিস্তানকে এত বড় স্বীকৃতির কথা ঘোষণা করে ফেলবেন, তা ভারত ভাবতে পারেনি। কিন্তু এন ডি এ সরকারের পক্ষে আমেরিকার এই পদক্ষেপের কড়া সমালোচনা করাও সম্ভাবনা হচ্ছে না। কূটনৈতিক বিশেষজ্ঞদের মতে, যাকে নিজেদের 'বড় বন্ধু' হিসাবে দেখাতে চায় কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার, সে-ই প্রতিবেশী দেশকে ব্যাপক সুযোগ-সুবিধা দেওয়ার কথা তাকে ঘৃণাক্ষরেও জানাল না, এটা অবশ্যই ভারতের কূটনৈতিক পরাজয়। কিন্তু বেশি ক্ষোভ দেখালে, তাতে বাজপেয়ী সরকারের বিদেশনীতির প্রচারই ভোঁতা হয়ে পড়বে।

তাই আমেরিকার আচরণে হতাশা ব্যক্ত করলেও ভারতের সঙ্গে 'কৌশলগত সুসম্পর্ক' বজায় রাখতে আমেরিকা যে আগ্রহী, সেই কথাটাও আজ বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের পক্ষ থেকে মনে করানোর চেষ্টা হয়েছে। বলা হয়েছে, “এই ঘোষণা করার মাত্র দু'দিন আগেই মার্কিন বিদেশসচিব ভারতে এসেছিলেন। যখন উনি ভারতে ছিলেন, তখন ভারত ও মার্কিন কৌশলগত অংশীদারির বিষয়ে গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হয়েছিল।” অন্য দিকে, দিল্লিতে মার্কিন দূতাবাসের উপ-রাষ্ট্রদূত রবার্ট ব্লেকের কর্তাদের সঙ্গে দফায় দফায় বৈঠক করেছেন। বিদেশ মন্ত্রক সূত্রের খবর, আমেরিকার তরফে নয়াদিল্লিকে আশ্বস্ত করার চেষ্টা করে বলা হয়েছে, মার্কিন প্রশাসন ভারতকে দীর্ঘ দিন ধরেই একজন অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কৌশলগত সঙ্গী মনে করে। ভবিষ্যতেও এই সম্পর্ক ধরে রাখা হবে। পাশাপাশি, এই সিদ্ধান্ত যে ভারত-মার্কিন সম্পর্কের উপরে প্রভাব ফেলবে, সেই বাতর্ঘ্যে নয়াদিল্লি আমেরিকার কাছে পৌঁছে দিতে চেয়েছে। বলা হয়েছে, “আমরা এই সিদ্ধান্তের বিষয়ে বিস্তারিত পর্যালোচনা করছি। ভারত ও মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সম্পর্কে এই সিদ্ধান্তের গভীর প্রভাব রয়েছে। আমরা মার্কিন সরকারের সঙ্গে এই বিষয়ে যোগাযোগ বজায় রাখছি।” বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের খবর, মূলত আমেরিকা নেটো-বহির্ভূত মিত্র হিসাবে পাকিস্তানকে বাড়তি কী সুবিধা দিতে পারে, তারই আন্দাজ করার চেষ্টা চলছে।

পাকিস্তান যখন আমেরিকার কাছে বিশেষ সামরিক-মিত্রের স্বীকৃতি পাচ্ছে, তখন ভারত আমেরিকার সঙ্গে প্রতিরক্ষা-সমঝুয়োর সমীকরণ পাল্টাতে আগ্রহী। এত দিন ভারতীয় সেনাবাহিনীর সঙ্গে সরাসরি যোগাযোগ রাখত মার্কিন বাহিনীর প্যাসিফিক কমান্ড। এ বার ভারত চাইছে মার্কিন বাহিনীর সেন্ট্রাল কমান্ডের সঙ্গে সমন্বয় তৈরি করতে।

ক্রিকেটে, কুটনীতিতে ভারত

০৭ মার্চ - ২০০৪



এতীকী? ভারত অভিযাত্রিক সৌরভ ডুপতিত, দেখছেন দীর্ঘদেহী পাক অভিযাত্রিক ইনজামামাকে। শুক্রবার পেশোয়ারে। তখন কিন্তু পাক ইনিংসের গোড়ার দিক।—এ এফ পি

‘মেঘনাদ’ মিয়াঁদাদের চাঙ্গে পেশোয়ারে জিত পাকিস্তানের

সৌভম ভট্টাচার্য • পেশোয়ার

তারিখ: ২৪-৯ (৫০ ওভার)
পাকিস্তান: ২৪৭-৬ (৪৭.২ ওভার)

১৯ মার্চ: পারস্যের ফাইনালে অস্ট্রেলিয়াকে হারানোর পরে মতোই কঠিন দাঁড়িয়ে গেল মামলা। পাকিস্তান সিরিজে ২-১ এগিয়ে যেতেই আবার নিয়াজ স্টেডিয়ামে যা চিংকার উঠল, এক ঘণ্টা দুই মিনিটের পাস কেন্দ্র, করাচির ক্রিস্টেনেও হয়তো শোনা গিয়েছে। কিন্তু সৌরভের সময়, পাকিস্তানি সমর্থকদের উল্লাস নয়। আরও অনেক গভীরে। রবি ও বুধবার বাকি দুটো ওয়ান ডে তাঁকে টিম নামাতে হবে লাহোরের গন্দাকি স্টেডিয়ামে। ব্যাটসম্যানদের কাছে যে বাইশ গজ ভূষণ। লতপত করতে করতে এই দু’আড়াই জন বোলার নিয়ে তৈরি তাঁর প্যাকেজ সেখানে কী ভাবে থামবে উদ্ভীষ্ট ইয়ারের হামিদদের?

ম্যাচের পর একটা অটোজাফের খাতা এগিয়ে দিয়েছিল কেউ। লোকটির দিকে আগুনে দুটি হেলি হেলি করে সৌরভ উঠে গেলেন স্ট্রেসিংকমে। এখনই লাহোরের বিমান ঘরতে বার হাঙ্ক-একটুও বিশ্রিত হাঙ্ক না। সবার আগে সৌরভ জানেন তাঁর এত ছুতোয় এলেন না সাংবাদিকদের সামলানো। তাঁর এমন আচরণে আকাশের সিরিজ বোধহয় পেশোয়ারের মাঠেই শেষে এলেন।

চলতি সিরিজ সম্পর্কে বলা হাঙ্কি যারা চাপ বত ভাল নেবে, তারা জিতবে। পিতি স্টেডিয়ামে চাপের মুখে ছুই উইকেট হাতে নিয়ে ভারত যা করবে পারবে, পাকিস্তান সেটাই করে দেখাল হাতে মার্চ চার উইকেট নিয়ে। ৭৪ বলে ৭৪ রান করে গেলেন আব্দুর রহমান আর করাচির অভিশপ্ত সেই মইন খান। একটা সময় ভারতীয় পেশোয়ারা এক দিক ভাল ধরেছিলেন। আর এক দিকে চাপটা বেশে যাওয়া এবং উইকেট তোলায় জয় দরকার ছিল স্পিনার। কিন্তু এই টিমে সেটা কবে কে? আছেই বা কে? মরিয়া সৌরভ ফটিকা খেললেন সঠিন ডেভেলপমেন্টে দিয়ে। ব্যাটিংয়ে বার্থ সঠিন বল হাতে যথেষ্ট লাভলেন। কিন্তু ওই সময় পরপর উইকেট বার করা তিনি কী করে পারলেন? শেষ ওভারে বেশ কয়েকটা শর্ট বল পড়ে ব্যাটসম্যানদের চাপটাই হাঙ্কা হয়ে গেল। জনতা পেয়ে গেল ঠিক যা চাইছিল।

ফাইনাল ছেলে ইয়াসের ম্যান অব দ্য ম্যাচ। ভারত জিতলে নিকমই ইরফান পাঠান হতেন। আসলে এরা কেউ না—ম্যান অব দ্য ম্যাচ ছিল পেশোয়ার উইকেট। যেখানে শুরুতে বেশি, পরে কম—কিন্তু সারাক্ষণই বল সিম করেছে। উইকেট গোলমালে মানেই টসের গুরুত্ব বাড়া। আর টস গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হয়ে পড়া মানেই ইমরান-মিয়াঁদাদ মতবিবোধ। অবশ্য নেওয়ার এত বছর মানেই দু’জনের ব্যক্তিগত দখলে এত অমিল এবং তা নিয়ে এমন প্রত্যাঙ্গা অন্তর্ভুক্ত যে গ্রাডম্যান-লারউভের মতো এই কাজিমাটাও মনে

হাঙ্ক জীবদশার শেষ অধিষ্টি যাবে। করাচির মতোই ইনজামাম টস জিতে ফিল্ডিং নিয়েছেন শোনা মাত্র ইমরান দোবারোপ শুরু করেন কোচকে: “আমি তখনই জানি। সকালে জানে যখন মিনিমি করে বলাছিল, আরে যাস ছেড়েছে দেখছি। ভিত্তি—একবারে চিত্ত।” ইমরান তখনই যোগ্য করে দিলেন, ভারত ম্যাচটা জিতছে। “পাকিস্তানের সর্বনাশ করে দিল মিয়াঁদাদ।” যোরানে সিঁড়ি দিয়ে নামতে নামতে এ বার দেখতে গেলেন ইরান চ্যাপেলকে। “ফান, তুমি তো এত বড় ক্যাপ্টেন। টস জিতলে আজ কী করতে বল তো?”

চ্যাপেল মনে হল মিয়াঁদাদের পক্ষে। বললেন, “অন্যায় কী আছে? আমিও তো কয়েকবার টস জিতে বিপক্ষকে বাট করতে পাঠিয়েছি।” ইমরান যা শুনে আরও উত্তেজিত, “তা বলে আজ নিশ্চয়ই পাঠাতে না। পরে বাট করা মানে ভারতের পুরো রানের চাপটা মাথায় নিতে হবে। ১৩ ওভার বন সিম করলে একে বাকি ৪০ ওভার নিরাপদ বাট করার সুযোগ ছেড়ে দেবে?” প্রাক্তন দুই অভিযাত্রিকের কথাবার্তা এত জোরে হাঙ্কি যে পাক বোর্ডের কর্মী মারফত দ্রুত সেটা জেনেই ফেললেন স্ট্রেসিংকমে মিয়াঁদাদ। শুধু হয়ে গেলেন। পাক সাংবাদিকের মুখে শুলাম, কোচ খেলার পর বলেছেন, “আরে হাম তি কুই ক্রিকেট খেলে যায়।”

মজা হল, ইনজামাম যতই রান করুন আর খাতায় কলমে টিমের অভিযাত্রিক হন, আসল কুখনাদ কে সবাই জানেন। সৌরভও সে দিন বলছিলেন, “মিয়াঁদাদই সব।” দেখা গেল শোয়ের আখতার কাল পিঠে যে সে সজাত আজকে মুত যাস এবং ‘ভাওজাবাজি’ বলে উড়িয়ে দিয়েছিলেন সেটাই আজ ঠিকঠাক লিঙ্গ পাকিস্তান। আর টিম বললেই জিতে কিন্তু করল। ম্যাচটা ঘুরিয়ে দিল তাদের প্রথম বিস্কু করাই।

সৌরভ কি তা হলে ম্যাচটা টসেই হারলেন? হ্যাঁ এবং না। না কারণ, টস জিতলে কী করা হবে নিয়ে ভারতীয় স্ট্রেসিংকমে দু’রকম মতবাদ শোনা যাচ্ছিল। এখন সৌরভ কী বললেন জানি না। যতদূর শুলাম, জিতলে তিনি ব্যাটই নিতেন। ইয়ারের যে ম্যান অব দ্য ম্যাচ আগেই লিখেছি। খেলাটার প্যাটার্ন ঠিক করে দিলেন কিন্তু তারও আগে সার্কির আমেদ। পারনার বা ক্রফটের মতোই উচ্চতা তাঁর। ছুইট চার ইঞ্চি। হাই আর্ম অ্যাকশন। সার্কিরের কোন বলটা সিম করে ভেতরের টুকবে, কোনটা বাইরে যাবে বোঝাই যাচ্ছিল না। উইকেট দিকে আগুনে গতিতে বল করে যাচ্ছিলেন শোয়েব। যুবরাজ সিংহ ও বলাজির লড়াই বন্ধ শুরু হয়নি, ভারত ১৪০-৬ প্রেসবক কত তাড়াতাড়ি শোলা শেষ হবে তা নিয়ে জন্মান।

তেমন মন দিয়ে আর কেউ খেলাও দেখছেন না। দিলীপকুমারের পেশোয়ারের বাড়ি দেখে এসেছেন এক জন। তার বর্ণনা দিচ্ছেন। এক জন এসে বলছেন নেতাটির পেশোয়ার থেকে

এর পর নয়ের পাতায়

ANANDA BAZAR PATTIKA

20 MAR 2004

বিপাগকে

পাওয়ায়ালের প্যাঁচে

ভোটে মূখে

বিজেপি বেকায়দায়

সাঁঞ্চ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৯ মার্চ—আমেরিকা পাকিস্তানকে লেটো-বাহির্ভূত মিত্রের স্বীকৃতি দেওয়ার ভোটারের মুখে বাজেশ্বরী সরকার তথা বিজেপি বেশ বেকায়দায় পড়ছে। বিরোধীরা এখন এ ব্যাপারে সরকারের ও শাসক দল বি জে পি’র বক্তব্য জানতে চাপ দিতে শুরু করেছে। পাকিস্তানকে আমেরিকার নেটো-বাহির্ভূত বন্ধুর স্বীকৃতিতে ভোটারের মুখে বাজেশ্বরী সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে নতুন অস্ত্র পাশে পাশে গিয়েছে বিরোধী দলগুলি। এ বার প্রচারে বিজেপি পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে সংঘাতের রাস্তা ত্যাগ করে মৈত্রীর পথনির্দেশনাকেই তুলে ধরার কৌশল নিয়েছে। এখন আমেরিকার কাছ থেকে অপ্রত্যাশিত, এই থাকায় বিজেপির বহুল-প্রচারিত ‘ফিল্ড গুড’ ফ্যাঙ্কিওরে চিড় ধরার আশঙ্কা। আর তাই, কিল খেয়ে কিল চুরি করতে হাঙ্ক সরকারকে। প্রাণ্ড ফুঙ্ক হলেও বিদেশমন্ত্রক ঘানার ৪৮-ঘণ্টা পরেও আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে বিবৃতি দিয়ে গোটো ব্যাপারটার গুরুত্ব আরোপ করতে চাইছে না। তবে আমেরিকাকে বাজেশ্বরী সরকারের অসন্তোষ জানিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে, দিল্লিতে মার্কিন দূতাবাসের উপ-রাষ্ট্রদূত রবার্ট ব্রেক কাল ও আজ সাউথ ব্লকের কর্তাদের সঙ্গে দফায় দফায় বৈঠক করেছেন। আমেরিকার পক্ষ থেকে জানানো হয়েছে, এই ঘটনায় ভারতের অসন্তুষ্ট হওয়ার কোনও কারণ নেই। আশা করা যায়, ভারত ক্ষুব্ধ হবে না।

আজ কংগ্রেস ও সিপিএম, দুই প্রধান বিরোধী দলই বাজেশ্বরী সরকারের বিদেশনীতি নিয়ে সরব হয়েছে। কেন্দ্র বিড়ফনা লুকাতে এই বিষয়ে এখনও বিবৃতি দেয়নি। আর এই জায়গাটিতেই কংগ্রেস ও বিজেপি কেন্দ্রকে চাপে ধরতে চাইছে। সনিয়া গান্ধীর দল আজ সরাসরি এই নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজেশ্বরীর বিবৃতি দাবি করেছে। সিপিএম আজ একসঙ্গে অনেকগুলি প্রশ্ন ছুড়েছে বাজেশ্বরীর বিদেশনীতির দিকে। যেমন, ‘এরপরেও কি কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার একমের্কাভিত্তিক বিদেশনীতি চালিয়ে যাবে? এবং পাকিস্তানের সম-মর্যাদা সমেত আমেরিকার মুখোশ্বরী হয়ে থাকবে?’ সিপিএমের অভিযোগ, এই সরকারের আমলে ভারতের বিদেশনীতির মর্যাদা হানি হয়ে তা কার্যত আমেরিকার ধামাধরা হয়ে গিয়েছে। এটা জাতীয় স্বার্থের পক্ষে বিপজ্জনক।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী সনিয়ালায় সূত্রে আজ বলা হয়েছে, পঞ্চদশ না-করলেও কুটনৈতিক কৌশল হিসাবেই এই পরিস্থিতিতে ভারত আপাতত মনে নিচ্ছে। কেননা এখন প্রকাশ্যে আমেরিকা ও পাকিস্তানের বিদেশনীতি করার অর্থ আন্তর্জাতিক কুটনীতির ক্ষেত্রে আরও নিঃসঙ্গ হয়ে যাওয়া। এখন আপাতত কিল খেয়ে তা হজম করা ছাড়া অন্য পথ খোলা নেই। দ্বিতীয়ত, ভোটারের মুখে এই অসন্তোষ ও ক্ষোভ সরকারের বার্তাকেই তুলে ধরবে। তাই বিবৃতি নিয়ে প্রতিক্রিয়া না-জানানোর সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে সরকার। তৃতীয়ত, পাকিস্তান এখন যে পরিস্থিতিতে মার্কিন কমান্ডোদের পাক ভূখণ্ডে ঢুকিয়ে তালিবান বিরোধী অভিযানকে তীব্র করেছে, তাতে আমেরিকার পক্ষে পারভেজ প্রশাসনকে নানা ভাবে সাহায্য করা হবে। পাকিস্তানকে বাড়াই সামরিক সাহায্য দেওয়ার ব্যাপারে ইঙ্গিত দিলেও পাকিস্তানকে যে ন্যাটো-বাহির্ভূত মিত্রের স্বীকৃতি দেওয়া হবে, সেটা কিন্তু জানাননি।

সরকারের রথী মহারথীরা অধিকাংশই নানা রাজ্যে প্রচারে যাত্রা। উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাবী আজ নাপপুর পৌঁছেছেন। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে তাঁর এই বিষয়ে কথা হয়েছে। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী জর্জ ফর্নান্দেসজ নাপপুরে আত্মগোপন করে জার্নালে গিয়েছিলেন। আডবাবী-জর্জ কথা হয়েছে। আডবাবী পরামর্শ দিয়েছেন যাতে সরকার এই ঘটনায় আমেরিকার বিরুদ্ধে বিবৃতি দেয়। এ নিয়ে আলোচনা চলছে। প্রিন্সিপাল সেক্রেটারি ব্রজেশ মিশ্র আপাতত নীরবতা বক্ষার পক্ষে হলেও ভারতের নিরাপত্তা নিয়ে উদ্বিগ্ন। পাকিস্তানকে নিতনতুন অস্ত্র সরবরাহ করা হলে তা ভারতের পক্ষে নিশ্চয়ই উদ্বেগের। এখন না হলে অস্ত্র ভবিষ্যতে পাকিস্তানকে একই ভাবে আমেরিকা এফ ১৬ দেবে না, তার নিশ্চয়তা কী? পাক রানি এলিজাবেথের জন্মদিন উপলক্ষে ব্রিটিশ হাইকমিশনারের বাড়িতে নৈশভোজ ছিল। সেখানে ব্রিটিশ কুটনীতিকেরা ছিলেন, ছিলেন ভারতীয় বিদেশমন্ত্রকের কর্তারাও। ব্রিটেনের কুটনীতিকেরাও জানান, আমেরিকা এই সিদ্ধান্ত দিল্লিতে মার্কিন ও ব্রিটিশ রাষ্ট্রদূতদেরও আগে জানায়নি। বিশেষত, পাকিস্তানে যখন দু’দেশের ক্রিকেট চলাই এবং ক্রিকেটকে কেন্দ্র করে মৈত্রীর পরিবেশ গড়ে উঠেছে, তখন এই ঘটনা শুধু ভারত-পাকিস্তান নয়, ভারত-মার্কিন সম্পর্কেও প্রভাব ফেলতে পারে, সে কথা সাউথ ব্লক থেকে আমেরিকা ও ব্রিটেনকে জানানো হয়েছে।

ভোটারের জন্য চাইলেও এখনই আকস্মিক ভাবে কৌশল বদলে দিল্লি পাকিস্তান-বিরোধিতায় সামিল হতে চাইছে না। অন্য দিকে, নভেম্বরে প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচনের

এর পর পাঠের পাতায়

অটলের বিরুদ্ধে ফের তোপ দাগলেন তোগাড়িয়া

জয়পুর, ১০ মার্চ— 'ফিল্ড' নিয়ে সন্দেহ প্রকাশ করেছিলেন আগেই। দু'দিন আগে গুজরাত দাঙ্গা নিয়ে উপপ্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানীর বক্তব্যের বিরোধিতা করার পর এ বার প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর বিরুদ্ধেও সরাসরি তোপ দাগলেন বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদের সাধারণ সম্পাদক প্রবীণ তোগাড়িয়া। জওহরলাল নেহরু তাঁর আমলে চিনের ব্যাপারে যে 'ভুল' করেছিলেন, পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে নতুন করে আলাপ-আলোচনা শুরু করে বাজপেয়ী সেই একই 'ভুলের' পুনরাবৃত্তি ঘটানো বলে মন্তব্য করেছেন তিনি।

তোগাড়িয়ার কাছে পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে আলোচনার টেবিলে বসার অর্থ হল, ভারতের ভাগ্যকে 'জেহাদিদের হাতে সমর্পণ' করা। কারণ, শান্তির জন্য পাকিস্তান কতটা আন্তরিক তা নিয়ে যথেষ্ট সন্দেহ রয়েছে তাঁর। পাকিস্তান এখনও দাউদ ইব্রাহিমকে ভারতের হাতে তুলে দেয়নি। ইন্ডিয়ান এয়ারলাইন্সের বিমান ছিনতাইয়ের ঘটনায় প্রধান অভিযুক্ত আজহার মাহমুদও সে দেশে বহাল তবিয়তে ঘুরে বেড়াচ্ছে। এর আগে, 'হিন্দি-চিনি ভাই ভাই'-এর স্লোগান তুলে ১৯৬২ সালেই চিনের সঙ্গে যুদ্ধে জড়িয়ে পড়তে হয়েছিল নেহরুর ভারতকে। পরোক্ষ ভাবে সে কথা স্মরণ করিয়ে তোগাড়িয়া বলেন, '(উনিশশো) পঞ্চাশের দশকে চিনকে বিশ্বাস করে জওহরলাল যে ভুল করেছিলেন, বাজপেয়ীও পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় অংশ নিয়ে সেই একই ভুল করছেন।"

তোগাড়িয়া স্বভাবতই ভারত-পাক

ক্রিকেট সিরিজ নিয়েও খুশি নন— "খেলার চেয়ে অনেক বেশি জরুরি হল দেশের নিরাপত্তা।" সম্প্রতি নিরাপত্তা কর্মীদের বিরুদ্ধে মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘনের অভিযোগ নিয়ে যে হইচই হচ্ছে, তাতেও তিনি ঘোর অসন্তুষ্ট। তোগাড়িয়ার মতে, এই জাতীয় মামলাগুলি অবিলম্বে প্রত্যাহার করে নেওয়া উচিত। এ ছাড়া, পরিষদ ঠিক করেছে, হাইকোর্ট ও সুপ্রিম কোর্টে জওয়ানদের হয়ে নিখরচায় মামলা লড়তে তাঁরা আইনজীবীদের একটি দল গঠন করবেন। — পি টি আই

প্রার্থীদের হলফনামা

নয়াদিল্লি, ১০ মার্চ— বিভিন্ন সরকারি দফতরকে কত টাকা দেওয়া বাকি আছে তা জানিয়ে প্রার্থীদের হলফনামা দেওয়ার নির্দেশ দিল নির্বাচন কমিশন। এর আগে কমিশন বলেছিল, 'কোনও টাকা বাকি নেই' এই মর্মে প্রার্থীদের সার্টিফিকেট দিতে হবে। সেই নির্দেশের পরিবর্তন করেই এখন তারা বলছে, টেলিফোন, বিদ্যুৎ, জল, বাড়ি ভাড়া ও যাতায়াতে প্রার্থীরা যা খরচা করেছেন, কিন্তু এখনও টাকা দেননি, তার বিস্তারিত হিসেব দিতে হবে এই হলফনামায়। রাজ্য ও কেন্দ্র শাসিত অঞ্চলের মুখ্য নির্বাচনী অফিসারদের চিঠি লিখে নির্বাচন কমিশন জানিয়েছে, প্রার্থীদের কাছ থেকে হলফনামা পেলে তা এলাকার অন্তত দু'টি সংবাদপত্রে প্রকাশ করতে হবে। তার মধ্যে একটি হবে আঞ্চলিক ভাষার। প্রার্থীদের সম্পূর্ণ তালিকা তৈরি হওয়ার দু'দিনের মধ্যেই এই হলফনামা জমা দিতে হবে। — পি টি আই

Reimagining the world

In a general election, it is domestic issues that are of prime concern. Foreign policy issues are usually of marginal interest. Yet, foreign policy issues are of importance since they involve the unity, territorial integrity and other dimensions of national survival. It is in this context that one examines the record of the present government and speculates on what the main opposition party, the Congress, may do if it were to come to power. I deliberately use the word speculate because at the time of writing this article, the Congress manifesto is in the process of finalisation. Whatever its form, the party's views on foreign policy got crystallised during the brainstorming at Shimla in July 2003.

There is much hype about India's nuclear weaponisation, the peace initiative with Pakistan, forward movement in relation with the US under the NDA government. The substantive points of critical evaluation, however, are that nuclear weaponisation and foreign economic policy — for which the NDA government claims credit — were essentially based on the long-term foundations laid by the Congress from 1984 to 1996, when it was in power.

An objective assessment of the NDA government's foreign policy indicates that, for one, its policies towards Pakistan have been full of contradictions swinging between "Now we will fight to the finish" and "Now we will make up". There is no clarity or a structured negotiating stance on the issues at dispute. Also, even as we acknowledge the undoubted importance of Indo-US relations, they need not have led to the kind of submissive, subaltern policies which the present government adopted towards the US.

The focus here is not to indulge in a partisan criticism of the NDA government. The Congress party's focus is on the future. Among the foreign policy challenges India will face in the foreseeable future would be the requirement to structure new



A critique of the NDA government's record in foreign policy

J.N. DIXIT

equations with important power centres of the world after the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, because of the disappearance of leverages which India had in fashioning its foreign and security policies of the last 50 years. An important dimension of this concern is the creation of a stable and calibrated relationship with the US without, at the same time, losing the ability to take independent decisions on foreign and security policies. South Asia, constituting nearly one-fifth of the world's population, also happens to be one of the poorest regions of the world. Meeting socio-economic

requirements through appropriate policies is another challenge. Between the nature of the civil societies and anxieties about consolidating individual national identities by promoting civic nationalism that is integrative rather than separative.

The complexes and aspirations generated by the asymmetry between India, on the one hand, and other south Asian countries, on the other, has resulted in tensions in the region which need to be overcome. India has a special responsibility in this regard, while the other countries need to make an effort to overcome the burdens of history. Contentful regionalism is the only solution. The establishment of SAARC was an attempt

An important dimension of policy making is the creation of a stable relationship with the US without losing the ability to take independent decisions

at such regionalism. It has been stalled primarily due to political tensions. The solution is, therefore, to deal with the political problems in a pragmatic manner to move on to the more desirable objective of regional cooperation.

Nonproliferation is another issue which requires a change of approach. There is a shift in international nonproliferation policies. The agenda of the established nuclear weapons powers is not so much about comprehensive disarmament as to ensuring an arms control programme on a discriminatory basis only to prevent the further horizontal proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. India should clearly emphasise its

determination to preserve its nuclear weapons and missile assets. While doing this, it should endeavour to formulate an approach where it can assure the major powers that its weapons capacities in no way threaten their security interests, given its record as a responsible nuclear weapons state.

There are reservations about America's dominant influence in world policies. But the reality is that no individual country has the ability to resist its influence effectively. The choice is to confront and resist the US and get isolated, or to make ourselves a subordinate ally of the US, or adopt a strategy of engaging the US on the basis of equality while developing equations with other major powers to redress the imbalances of US dominance.

While India should maintain its relations with the international coalition on terrorism, in all its political and operational dimensions, we must be clear in our mind that we will have to fight our battle against terrorism on our own. It must also be kept in mind that crossborder terrorism does not emanate only from Pakistan. There are other groups operating in the Northeast and other states which have their origins, even links, with terrorist organisations like the LTTE. A sustained effort should be made to see that terrorist violence is not blindly applied to one religious community or the other, or one case or the other.

So the macro-level objectives of India's foreign policy would be to safeguard India's security and vital strategic interests. The endeavour would be to form a foreign policy based on informed national consensus.

The writer is vice-chairman, Foreign Affairs Department of the AICC. The views expressed here are his own.

Shekhar Gupta's column, 'National Interest', will appear next week

110-13
20/2

China, Japan welcome India-Pakistan accord

India & Pakistan

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, FEB. 19. China and Japan today hailed the latest India-Pakistan accord on bilateral talks in a conspicuously upbeat fashion. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Zhang Qiyue, said that India and Pakistan had now taken "a solid step towards peaceful relations."

She said at a regular press conference in Beijing today that "China supports this [development] and believes that they [India and Pakistan] should exert [themselves] for further efforts in this direction."

Affirming that "China is very pleased to see the positive results" of the latest diplomatic engagement between India and Pakistan, Ms. Zhang noted that they "defined the agenda" and "arrangements" for further discussions.

Their joint statement was also seen as marking a "consensus

on peaceful solutions to their disputes."

Japan, which too monitors the India-Pakistan scene very closely, noted that "both parties agreed to discuss and arrive at a peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir."

The Japanese Foreign Ministry said it "welcomes" the new schedule of meetings between India and Pakistan as "significant progress in relations between the two countries and stability of the region."

In a statement in Tokyo, the Ministry said: "Japan holds in high regard the efforts taken by both countries since last year towards improving their relations." Tokyo expressed the "hope that further progress will be achieved through the coming talks" as now agreed upon by India and Pakistan.

China today welcomed the "positive" contribution that the

Sino-Indian Eminent Persons' Group [EPG] made towards the "strengthening" of bilateral relations at their latest meeting in Beijing. The two-day session of the non-official group, the fourth in a series, concluded earlier in the day.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Zhang Qiyue, told reporters in Beijing that both sides in the EPG "gave a highly positive assessment [of] the favourable development of Sino-Indian relations" at this stage.

Noting that the members of the EPG exchanged views on "strengthening cooperation" in the fields of political and economic cooperation as also science and technology and culture, she said the meeting was of "positive" significance for "mutual understanding and friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation between China and India."

THE HINDU 20 FEB 2001

India, Pak agree on dialogue framework

OUR BUREAU

Islamabad, Feb. 17: India and Pakistan today reached a "broad understanding" on a framework for composite dialogue after two days of meetings.

The agreement came after middle-ranking foreign ministry officials held the first formal talks after more than two and a half years, with the Kashmir dispute as one of the top issues.

"A broad understanding was reached on the modalities and timeframe for commencing the composite dialogue," Pakistan's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Indian foreign secretary Shashank and his Pakistan counterpart Riaz Khokhar are due to meet in Islamabad tomorrow. The statement said the negotiating teams would submit their recommendations to them for approval.

The agreement is expected to revive a "composite dialogue" over eight areas of dispute, a process that collapsed at

the Agra summit in 2001.

But Pakistan Television said the teams had also considered proposals to add another two items to the agenda, without giving details. "Broadly, we'll carry forward what was agreed in 1998," an Indian official in Islamabad said.

Under the composite dialogue formula agreed then, foreign secretaries would discuss Kashmir as well as a range of confidence-building measures meant to reduce the risk of nuclear and conventional war.

Officials from other ministries would tackle a range of issues, including trade and economic links, people-to-people contacts and disputes over water sharing, maritime boundaries and the Siachen glacier.

"We are starting the process with sincerity and we hope to continue this on a continuous basis," Shashank said in Delhi before flying to Islamabad.

Top government sources described today's talks as "successful" and "according to the ag-

enda". An Indian diplomat said the two sides broadly agreed on all issues and that the talks were held in a cordial atmosphere and made "good progress".

Diplomats of the two countries expect a joint statement if not a news conference by the foreign secretaries after their talks tomorrow.

Today's talks, held at the picturesque Bhurban hill station north of Islamabad, were headed by director-general of Pakistan's foreign ministry, Jalil Abbas Jilani, and joint secretary of the Indian foreign ministry, Arun Kumar Singh. Officials said they focused on the issues identified in the June 1997 foreign secretaries meeting.

A statement said Singh paid a courtesy call on Khokhar before going for the second round of talks. They are believed to have reviewed the progress of the first round held on Monday.

Diplomatic sources denied reports that both delegations exchanged proposals on a nuclear restraint regime.

Khan crack in nuke cabal

K.P. NAYAR AND
PRANAY SHARMA

Washington/New Delhi, Feb. 6: Less than a fortnight before India and Pakistan are to start bilateral talks, an unnatural coalition between Delhi and Islamabad that has puzzled the world for many years is showing signs of strain: thanks to nuclear proliferator Abdul Qadeer Khan.

Foreign minister Yashwant Sinha's assertion today that Khan's global nuclear black market is "not merely an internal matter of Pakistan" and that "things will not stop here" directly contradicts his Pakistani counterpart Khursheed Mehmood Kasuri's statement that Pakistan will not allow international inspectors to "peep into our (nuclear) programme".

Kasuri told BBC today that Pakistan is a "responsible nuclear power" and that "anything that impinges on our own national security is out of the question".

For decades, India and Pakistan had shared views on issues like the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and found themselves on the same side of the fence at global venues like the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

Diplomats from both countries have fought together against nuclear blackmail of non-wea-

pon states by the big powers especially since the nuclear tests in Pokhran and Chagai in 1998.

Indian diplomats in Washington who have been discussing the Khan episode with Bush administration officials say Pakistan's recent disgrace over proliferation of nuclear technology has altered this equation.

One diplomat yesterday drew the imaginative picture of India and Pakistan having been hitherto on a railway platform trying to get into the crowded carriage called nuclear club with room for only five persons.

Khan's confessions mean that Pakistan will be left standing on the platform as the train pulls out of the station, but India will stay on the footboard continuing its effort to secure a place in the carriage.

Significantly, Sinha said: "These are issues which will have to be debated in the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) and elsewhere so that we have a more responsible behaviour from countries which have nuclear capability."

His statement coincided with a declaration by IAEA spokesperson Mark Gwozdecky in Vienna that "this apparent nuclear supermarket is the most dangerous phenomenon we have seen in many years.... Unfortunately, it doesn't end with Mr. Khan...."

Talks with China progress

Beijing: Progress has been made at the latest round of Sino-Indian border talks and the level of mutual trust between the two Asian giants has increased to give a solid foundation for bilateral ties, a senior Chinese official said on Friday. "China-India relations are developing very well. Especially, we have improved our mutual trust, which is important for bilateral relations," Chinese vice-foreign minister Wang Yi said.

"Without mutual trust we cannot take our bilateral relations forward. This is the most important development," said Mr Wang, who was the chief guest at the Republic Day reception hosted by the Indian ambassador

to China, Nalin Surie, here. The Indian embassy hosted the reception 10 days in advance of the Republic Day as the Chinese will be on a week-long holiday to celebrate the lunar new year which falls on January 22. Secondly, Mr Wang noted that the bilateral economic cooperation between China and India is developing rapidly. According to official estimates, India-China trade in 2003 was expected to hit an all-time high of nearly seven billion US dollars.

On the border issue, he said, "We have made progress. Gradually, we are building a very strong foundation for the future of our bilateral ties." Mr Wang, who himself has led several rounds of India-

China border negotiations in the past however, did not go into the details of the talks, which were held in-camera as per an understanding reached between New Delhi and Beijing.

National security adviser Brajesh Mishra and executive vice-foreign minister Dai Bingguo held the second round of border talks here on January 12-13 which have been described officially as "positive and constructive".

Mr Wang is the senior-most Chinese official to comment on the latest round of talks between Mr Mishra and Mr Dai, the two special representatives of the two governments tasked with resolving the vexed border issue. PTI

15 Opposition poser on Indo-U.S. ties

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 14. The Congress and the Left parties today posed questions about the direction of Indo-U.S. ties, with the former demanding that the Centre come clean on the role of the Bush administration in the present thaw, while the Left questioned the "strategic ties" between New Delhi and Washington.

The Congress expressed concern over the statement of the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell that the Bush administration had played a crucial role in bringing the Vajpayee Government to the negotiating table with Pakistan.

While reiterating that the party has been a consistent advocate of constructive engagement with Islamabad, the Congress said it was the Bharatiya Janata Party which had made a political career of Pakistan-bashing. "Prime Minister Vajpayee has blown hot and cold over Pakistan, focussed it would appear, not so much on national security but on projecting himself now as a furious hawk and again as a statesmanlike dove," the party spokesperson, Abhishek

Singhvi, said. The party sought to know whether the Vajpayee Government got pushed to the negotiating table with Pakistan and what it did with the Bush administration for the last two years. "Vajpayee must stop beating around the bush and come clean," the party said.

Reacting to the announcement by the U.S. and Indian Governments about expanding the strategic partnership between the two countries in the realm of nuclear, space and high technology, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) said it was not just "what it is being touted to be but one more step taken by the Vajpayee Government to make India part of the United States' global strategic plans."

The commitment made by India to discuss cooperation with the American Missile Defence System was most objectionable, it said, adding that the Vajpayee Government was the first one to endorse Mr. Bush's strategic version of nuclear security and the Nuclear Missile Defence (NMD) system in May 2001. Even when other major countries of the world refused to subscribe to the new missile defence system, the Vajpayee

Government showed eagerness to be part of the new ballistic missile defence system. Further, the joint announcement showed that American concerns regarding nuclear proliferation were paramount while there were no concrete measures enabling India to access high technology.

"The BJP-led Government has been set on the course of acquiescing in the U.S. drive for global hegemony and new militarisation in turn for the U.S. acceptance of India's nuclear weapon status," the CPI(M) politburo said in a statement. While opposing "this pro-US policy" it demanded that the Vajpayee Government desist from making India party to American strategic plans.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) central committee said the "growing U.S. intervention in our national life will further weaken and destroy our national resources and economy and endanger crucial strategic independence and national sovereignty." It said that any alliance with the U.S. would mar the process of strengthening ties with the nations of South Asia and South-East Asia.

Editorial on Page 12

THE HINDU

15 JAN 2004

Atal, Bush Make Identical Statements On Cooperation In Nuclear, Space Programmes

India, US turn buddies in hi-tech domain

14/1/04

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 13 JANUARY

MOVING closer towards ending the 40-year-old American ban on dual-use technology, India and the United States on Tuesday formally pledged to expand cooperation in civilian nuclear issues, space programmes and high technology trade.

The announcement, which formally heralds the shift in US mindset towards India, came in the form of identical statements issued by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and President George Bush where they said the proposed cooperation would progress through a series of reciprocal steps that would build on each other.

"It will include expanded engagement on nuclear regulator

and safety issues and missile defence, ways to enhance cooperation in peaceful uses of space technology, and steps to create the appropriate environment for successful high technology commerce," they said.

Besides expanding the scope in critical areas like space and nuclear cooperation, the proposed agreement is also expected to contribute to deepening ties in commerce and increasing stability in Asia and beyond. The statement was the result of four meetings in the last few months of a bilateral High Technology Cooperation Group between the US undersecretary for commerce Kenneth Juster (who is also in charge of the Bureau of Industry and Security which issues licences for export of sensitive and dual-use technologies) and former foreign secretary Kanwal



US & THEM

AB Vajpayee & George Bush

importance in the discussions on the quarter issues was the passing of sensitive technology to other countries. US concerns in this context had heightened further in the light of knowledge that nuclear technology transfers took place from Pakistan to Iran, Libya and North Korea.

The statement affirmed to ensure that sensitive technology did not pass into wrong hands. "In order to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, relevant laws, regulations and procedures will be strengthened and measures to increase bilateral and international cooperation in this area will be employed. These cooperative efforts will be undertaken in accordance with our respective national laws and international obligations," the statement said.

The US has been seeking a

strengthening of Indian exports controls, especially in the backdrop of reports earlier that some high tech goods had been diverted to Iraq. The US had also used the example to impose sanctions on some Indian companies then. An agreement to enhance strategic partnership between India and the US was first taken in November 2001.

Meanwhile, Mr Karl Inderfurth, the former assistant secretary of state, said the statement was a "win win" for both India and the US. "What the US gets out of it is a strengthened relationship with a country that is going to play a major role in the 21st century. We are looking to India for enhanced trade and economic relations, and we are also looking to India for assistance in nuclear nonproliferation," he said.

Atal puts economics before politics

Pervez pricks, only briefly

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Islamabad, Jan. 4: In keeping with the visionary spirit of the adage 'Dream lofty dreams and as you dream, so shall you become', the leaders of the member states of South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) today attempted to visualise their future.

International economics should triumph over political prejudice in South Asia to transform it into an "economic powerhouse of the world", Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said at the inaugural session of the twelfth Saarc summit at the Jinnah Convention Centre today.

South Asia, Vajpayee said, was yet to grasp the profound truth that together it stands a better chance in the world.

Pakistan Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali voiced a similar sentiment when he said that globalisation could either lead to marginalisation or to the prospect of developing positive links as a region with the globalised world.

But there were obstacles in the way of enhancing even regional cooperation. Thus, the Indian Prime Minister said, a peace dividend had bypassed this region because "mutual suspicions and petty rivalries have continued to haunt us".

In a remarkably sagacious speech, Vajpayee gave a call for breaking down the recently constructed "barriers of political prejudice" and for renewing the far more enduring "bonds of religion, language, ethnicity and culture" which held South Asia together.

However, it has also been said that it takes a person who is wide awake to make his dreams come true. Vajpayee, therefore, not only offered actionable proposals for enhancing cooperation but also cautioned against obstacles in the way.

He recommended the setting up of a professionally managed



Vajpayee shakes hands with Musharraf as Jamali looks on in Islamabad on Sunday. (AP)

IMTIAZ GUL

Islamabad, Jan. 4: President Pervez Musharraf today flirted with one contentious issue, but skirted another, bigger one.

"We must expand the Saarc charter to discuss bilateral issues at the regional level," he said at a banquet he hosted for South Asian heads of state/government tonight.

India has strongly fought off Pakistan's efforts to bring bilateral issues into the multilateral forum and may not be happy Musharraf harped on it in a general atmosphere of bonhomie.

But the President went only that far and no farther, restraining himself from mentioning Kashmir, though he did speak about "disputes and tensions".

He linked fast economic development of South Asia, which India is emphasising on, to a peaceful resolution of disputes.

"Neither will we be able to embark on a road to development in absence of peace nor will there be peace as long as political disputes continue to fester," Musharraf said.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Musharraf shook hands in the presence of other Saarc leaders before all of them moved into the banquet hall where the Pakistani leader welcomed guests in a 10-minute speech.

After two years, the two came face to face — the last was at Saarc summit in January 2002 in Kathmandu.

Musharraf did not directly mention of Kashmir but said elimination of the cause of tensions is the essential step to

wards embracing the vision of an integrated and cohesive South Asia, to which "we all subscribe and yearn for".

His remarks came in the backdrop of talks between the prime ministers of Pakistan and India on the sidelines of the Saarc summit, which culminated in a request from the Indian delegation for Vajpayee's meeting with Musharraf.

The foreign secretaries of the two countries will also meet at breakfast tomorrow, a development that is being seen as an outcome of the Jamali-Vajpayee talks.

"South Asia must realise its destiny by confronting problems and not by shying away from them," Musharraf said, asking the regional leaders to make a pledge not to disappoint their people.

He said it was a "bitter truth" that Saarc cannot achieve its full potential till the resolution of political disputes.

South Asia has the potential of becoming a major economic centre but "we have dissipated our energies in external and internal political disputes, afflicting the majority of our people with poverty, illiteracy and backwardness".

"We have to demonstrate courage and determination to promote peace, contentment and dignity," he said. Pakistan is ready to play its part in this task.

He praised the Saarc leaders for quickly reaching common ground on a social charter, South Asian Free Trade Area, trafficking of women and children and the protocol on suppression of terrorism.

environment in our region in a just and realistic manner". However, he did praise Vajpayee as "a visionary, poet and an able politician".

President Chandrika Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka and Prime Minister Suryabhadur Thapa of Nepal welcomed the lowering of tensions between Indian and Pakistan and lauded its positive impact on the region.

However, as Jamali said: "The potential and promise of Saarc is nowhere near realisation."

So, while South Asia waits to realise its dream, it might help to recall the lyrics of a Dire Straits song, *Water of Love*.

It goes like this: *Water of love deep in the ground/ No water here to be found/ Someday baby when the river runs free/ It'll carry that water of love to me.*

and gun running".

Greater economic stakes in each other, Vajpayee felt, would "result in greater sensitivity to the concerns of each other". He described the action taken by Bhutan against the Indian insurgent groups sheltering there as "an outstanding example of sensitivity to the security concerns of a neighbour".

Such concern for each other, Vajpayee argued, could pave the way for the ambitious but "entirely achievable" goals such as "a free trade area, an economic union, open borders and a common currency for our region".

Pakistan Prime Minister Jamali, however, could not let go of contentious political issues. He felt that these goals "would remain distant dreams unless we are able to address the political

Saarc Poverty Alleviation Fund to underwrite projects to fight poverty. He offered an initial contribution of \$100 million to it.

Vajpayee also suggested developing "world-class connectivity" in the region through a transport infrastructure of road, rail, air, waterways and sea links; Indian help in widest cooperation in the use of information technology, bio-technology and other science and technology areas; and enhancing regional water and energy cooperation.

While arguing for encouraging the free movement of people across the region, Vajpayee wanted "sufficiently strong controls" to prevent illegal migration.

He supported free commercial interaction but also joint action to tackle "smuggling, drug trafficking, money laundering

Atal touch down to tango tune

9 f shw



Vajpayee with Jamali at Islamabad airport on Saturday. (PTI)

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Islamabad, Jan. 3: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has said that India "wants principled peace with Pakistan, based on the hopes and aspirations of the people". He claimed that this was indeed realisable.

Earlier in the evening, Pakistan's foreign minister Khurshed Mehmood Kasuri had said that his country was in a "positive frame of mind" for a dialogue with India. "But it takes two to tango," he had quipped. Now Vajpayee has indicated that India is willing to tango for peace.

"It is in the interest of the two countries to live together in a cooperative manner. This will not only benefit us but also the region and the world," Vajpayee said in an interview to Pakistan Television recorded this morning.

Bareilly had the Indian Prime Minister settled down in Islamabad's newest and swankiest five-star hotel, Serena, than his interview was telecast, changing the public mood in the Pakistani capital.

"We want friendship. We have to live together. We have to choose whether we want to live in peace or in disharmony," Vajpayee said, setting the mood for his visit to Islamabad.

Vajpayee said India could do business with General Pervez Musharraf and paid him a compliment, describing him as "the biggest leader of Pakistan today".

Displaying unusual optimism, Vajpayee said: "I think we can talk to General Musharraf. I

am also hopeful that these talks will lead to a solution."

He took in his stride the compliment of Musharraf that he was a man of peace, saying: "If he says that, he is not wrong. I believe in peace and have tried to work towards peace."

Vajpayee said India had never hesitated in discussing the Kashmir issue with Pakistan. He, however, argued that "time is needed to move forward" as the issue had not been discussed in a "sustained manner (*Jum kar baat nahin hui*)".

Could the relationship between India and Pakistan undergo the same kind of sweeping changes as the Sino-Indian relations, Vajpayee was asked. "We desire a change. But when this desire will be realised one cannot say," he replied.

Pervez date

Atal Bihari Vajpayee will make a courtesy call on Pervez Musharraf in keeping with Saarc conventions and protocol.

Vajpayee is scheduled to meet Musharraf along with

the other Saarc heads of government at a banquet hosted by the Pakistan President tomorrow evening.

Foreign secretary Shashank said Vajpayee had been briefed on this Saarc protocol. This was the closest that India was willing to come to admitting the possibility of a Vajpayee-Musharraf face-to-face interaction.



Condemning the communal carnage in Gujarat, Vajpayee said: "What happened in Gujarat was very bad.... It was a wrong step."

The Prime Minister said Pakistan-bashing was not an issue in the recent Assembly polls and it would not be allowed to become one in future elections.

Like the Prime Minister, foreign secretary Shashank also made a distinction between "bilateral" meetings that had been fixed between Vajpayee and Saarc leaders and the "interaction" with the Pakistan leadership. Such "interaction", he said, could take place during the leaders' retreat at the Pakistan Prime Minister's house or at Musharraf's banquet.

"Tremendous expectations have been aroused. Either we meet those expectations or interact in the context of Saarc," Shashank clarified. The "interaction", he said, "could be one-to-one or along with others present".

The Pakistani leadership is already trying to shape the contours of the "interaction", if it takes place.

Foreign minister Kasuri said the progress made in Agra should not be jettisoned. He added that in the wake of 9/11, some Indian formulations were changing. But at Agra, the Indian and Pakistani foreign ministers had drawn up a "draft" and Vajpayee had now even admitted that publicly.

He, therefore, argued: "It is better to stick to formulations generated from an internal dynamic rather than those that owe their origin to developments outside."

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