

US says nuke deal on track, underlines fine print

INDO-US ■ Changes in law (in time for Bush visit) once we begin to see separation of nuclear facilities, says Burns

2 CRAJAM MOHAN
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 19

WHILE the Bush Administration publicly reaffirmed its commitment to an early implementation of the bilateral nuclear pact with India, the Government is bracing up to a round of complex negotiations on the roadmap towards civilian nuclear energy cooperation this weekend.

Speaking at the Asia Society in New York yesterday, US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns said,

"By the time of President Bush's visit to India in early 2006, we plan to be in a position to ask Congress to make the necessary changes to put this agreement into effect. In the meantime, both India and the US need to take concrete steps to make this agreement possible."

Under the agreement signed by President Bush and Prime Minister



'Will work on NSG allies'

Manmohan Singh on July 18, India agreed to separate its civilian and military nuclear facilities and place the former under international safeguards. The US, on its part, promised to change its domestic as well as international nuclear rules in favour of India.

"We are committed to work with Congress to change US laws and policies. In Vienna this week, the US

will ask its friends and allies in the Nuclear Suppliers Group to enable full peaceful civil nuclear energy cooperation and trade with India," Burns said.

However, the devil, as always, is in the detail. The remarks of Burns on the timing and sequence of the implementation of mutual commitments under the nuclear pact leave considerable ambiguity.

Removing those ambiguities would be the main theme at the talks between Burns, who has emerged as the Administration's pointman on

Indo-US relations, and the Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran here on Friday and Saturday.

"Part of the purpose of my visit to Delhi this week is to work with the Indian government on a plan that would separate the civil and military nuclear states of India over the coming years," Burns said.

"Once that plan has been clearly enunciated and once it has been committed to by the Indian government and we begin to see its implementation, it will be a short time be

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

US says nuclear deal on track

fore the US Congress enacts the necessary legislative changes to bring this into being, and that will be a welcome moment, indeed," he added.

On its part, India would like to be certain that the Bush Administration has the legislative authority to sell nuclear reactors to India, before New Delhi puts its own unsafeguarded civilian nuclear facilities under international control.

While there might be no question of India front-loading its commitments, Delhi has also said the separation of its civilian and military facilities cannot be seen as a "one-shot" event.

India would like to see this as a process in which it would "phase in" the division of its current nuclear programme into civilian and military components and place the former under international safeguards in an incremental manner.

The US, on the other hand, would want a reasonable timeframe to complete this process.

Getting a sense of how Delhi wants to go about implementing its commitments, the Bush Administra-

tion has suggested, will be key to getting domestic and international support to the nuclear pact.

Burns underlined the importance of mutual trust in moving forward on the nuclear pact.

"Since too many in the US and India long viewed each other through the lens of the Cold War, we must first work to overcome certain lingering prejudices and suspicions in our own countries," Burns said.

Emphasising the importance of maintaining the momentum, Burns described the diplomatic style that will guide the negotiations with Saran.

"Our ongoing diplomatic efforts are not simply exercises in bargaining and tough-minded negotiation; they represent a broad confidence-building effort grounded in a political commitment from the highest levels of our two governments."

While both Singh and Bush are strongly committed to implementing the nuclear pact signed by them on July 18, the two governments might have to take some interim nuclear steps in order to generate that mutual confidence.

Triangular ties are tricky

WITH the triangular relationship among India, the United States, and Pakistan delicately poised, it is in the interest of all the three parties not to drop the ball now. The triangular interaction in New York last month among the leaders of the three countries underlined the reality that mis-steps in one set of relations could undermine the others.

Having achieved the near impossible — a simultaneous improvement of relations with both India and Pakistan over the last five years — the Bush administration ought to be extra-careful that what it does with Pakistan does not harm either Indo-US relations or the Indo-Pak peace process.

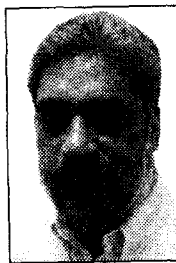
While cautioning the Bush administration against muddying the peace process with Pakistan and urging Islamabad not to overplay its hand on Kashmir, India should recognise its own responsibility to move the peace process forward.

When External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh meets Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf today, he has the challenging task of putting the New York debacle behind and coming up with a better understanding on how to make simultaneous progress on both cross-border terrorism and Kashmir.

Thanks to a deliberate policy of de-hyphenating relations with India and Pakistan, avoiding a tilt towards either on Indo-Pak issues and maintaining pressure on Islamabad to end cross-border terrorism, the Bush administration created a sound basis for expanding ties with both, as well as creating a conducive environment for the Indo-Pak peace process.

But in New York last month, the Bush administration was sharply reminded that its actions and statements — though well-meaning — could easily undo the tight-rope walking it has managed so far in the subcontinent.

Suggestions from senior Bush administration officials that India sho-



India, Pakistan and the US need to calibrate a variety of national concerns

C. RAJA MOHAN

uld take additional steps on Kashmir to make life easier for Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf produced the opposite effect. Similarly, in a probable miscalculation of his new standing in Washington, Musharraf over-reached on Kashmir in his meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. A peeved India in turn held back on taking the next logical steps in the peace process.

In New York, both Singh and Musharraf had conveyed their respective concerns about the peace process to President George W. Bush. Singh's emphasis was on Pakistan taking additional steps to curb cross-border terrorism and Musharraf in turn focused on India moving forward on Kashmir. Musharraf's deci-

Affairs Minister Natwar Singh, who stayed back in New York after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's departure, has had an opportunity to discuss the Pakistan question in some depth with US officials.

In late September, Pakistan's national security adviser — Tariq Aziz — was in Washington for a comprehensive discussion that included the domestic scene in Pakistan as well as ties with India. A few days later US National Security Adviser Steve Hadley was in Pakistan and Afghanistan revisiting the multi-dimensional US-Pakistan relations, including the India factor.

As India, Pakistan, and the US struggle to manage their triangular relationship, they need to effectively

When Natwar Singh meets Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf today, he has the challenging task of making progress on both cross-border terrorism and Kashmir

sion to raise the issue in the United Nations just hours before he met Singh for dinner, had provoked Indian anger and prevented the New York meeting from being productive. The Pakistan side's unfortunate attempt at specifying where troop reductions could take place in Kashmir — Kupwara and Baramulla were mentioned — prevented a naturally irate India from moving down a path it had already chosen.

Since then, all sides have had the opportunity to review the state of the triangular relationship. Both India and Pakistan sought to downplay the impression that the New York talks between Singh and Musharraf were a failure. External

calibrate a variety of different national concerns. These include the American interest in Musharraf's political future, Indian apprehensions about the credibility of Musharraf's steps against terrorism, Musharraf's fear that India will string out Pakistan on Kashmir, the continuing instability in Afghanistan, and the links between extremists in the subcontinent and global terrorism.

India's desire for a rapid conclusion of the procedures necessary for the implementation of the nuclear pact signed in July and the unfolding nuclear crisis in Iran have added yet another layer of complexity to the triangular relationship.

The talk in Washington on selling

77 F-16 fighter aircraft to Pakistan, Islamabad's pressure on Washington to extend nuclear energy cooperation to it on terms similar to those being offered to India, add to the dynamism in the triangular ties.

In response to new concerns in New Delhi that Washington is taking a softer approach to Musharraf, the Bush administration has tried to clarify matters. Fully aware that its low-key approach to the Indo-Pak peace process has been one of the reasons for its successful South Asia policy, Washington has now reaffirmed that it has no intention to inject itself into the Indo-Pak dialogue. While recognising the dangers of trying to rush the peace process forward, the Bush administration is underlining the importance of a number of new steps that Musharraf has taken against terrorism in recent weeks.

Besides cracking down on cross-border terrorism in J&K, Musharraf is believed to have restructured the ISI apparatus that deals with Kashmir and has made some decisions of long-term significance to the Indo-Pak peace process and the global war against terrorism.

Unlike in 2001, when Musharraf did take some cosmetic steps against the sources of terrorism in Pakistan, Washington believes he is more serious this time. One reason for this might be that the very forces responsible for terrorism in Kashmir are also the ones trying to get at Musharraf himself. The US is also concerned that many involved in Kashmir terrorism also have links with larger networks of terrorism operating in the Western world.

India has said at the highest levels in recent days, if there is credible and sustained evidence of the reduction in cross-border terrorism, India would be prepared to consider troop reductions in Jammu and Kashmir. Finding ways to make this, and a range of other bold reciprocal steps, happen should be at the top of agenda in the Natwar Singh-Musharraf exchange in Islamabad.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to the USA provides an opportunity to test the vitality of the US-Indian relationship. In particular, it will confirm whether the new US policy towards South Asia, first disclosed on 25 March when senior administration officials asserted that the USA had reached the decision "to help India become a major world power in the 21st century," represents the grand transformation in bilateral ties that has eluded both countries during the last 50-odd years.

In boldly declaiming, in Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's words, "that we're fully willing and ready to assist in th[e] growth of India's global power ... which we see as largely positive," the Bush administration effectively gave notice that it would systemically decouple India and Pakistan in its strategic calculations.

In other words, US relations with each state would be governed by an objective assessment of the intrinsic value of each country to US interests – rather than by fears about the effect on relations with the other. Far from disadvantaging India, as a superficial reading of the Bush administration's recent decision to sell F-16s to Pakistan could suggest, the new US policy is, in fact, intended to assist India in its ascent to great-power status.

A transformed bilateral relationship that makes the USA, as Ms Rice put it, "a reliable partner for India as it makes its move as a global power" will ultimately advance America's own global interests in defeating terrorism, arresting nuclear proliferation, promoting democracy, and preserving a stable balance of power in Asia over the long term.

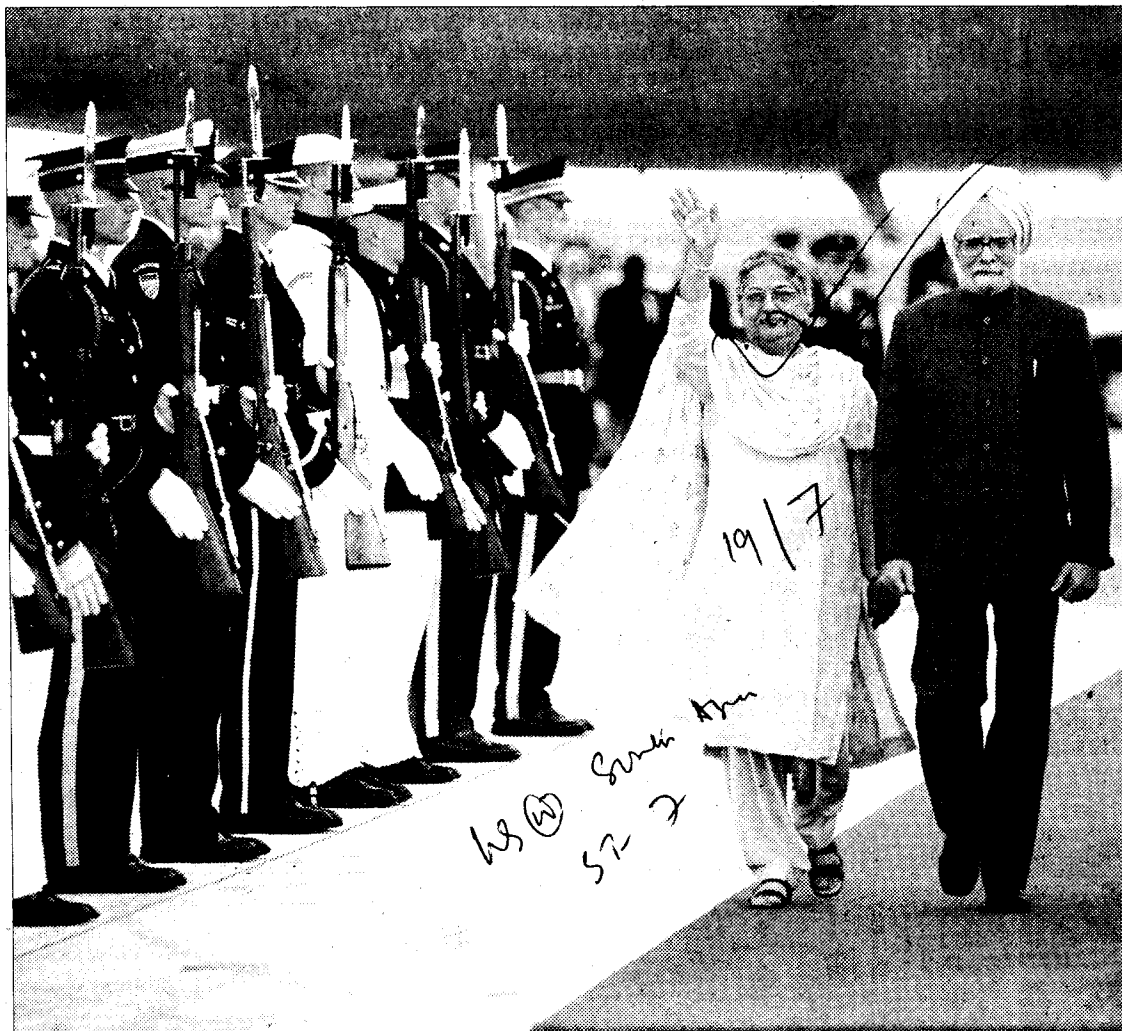
Achieving these objectives, however, requires a new approach that translates the President's intentions into new policy initiatives, something Dr Singh will be eager to judge for himself.

The administration's new policy towards India thus far has had two major components. First, the administration has overcome its past hesitation to supply India with advanced defence equipment. Accordingly, it has permitted Lockheed Martin and Boeing to offer the Indian Air Force F-16s and F-18s, respectively, and has promised that the USA would support future Indian requests for defence systems.

The administration has even intimated that the weapons and sensors it might provide India would be more advanced than those supplied to Pakistan. Second, and even more important for India, the administration has compressed the implementation schedule of the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership agreement previously reached with New

Testing waters

The Bush administration's new South Asia policy is no longer a zero-sum game, writes ASHLEY J TELLIS



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his wife Gursharan Kaur review the honour guard upon their arrival at Andrew Air Force Base outside Washington on Sunday. — AFP

Delhi, and has expressed its willingness to discuss a range of difficult and contentious issues through three separate, high-level dialogues on security, energy, and the economy.

The strategic dialogue's focus could be on global security issues, such as India's quest for permanent UN Security Council membership, future defence cooperation, high-technology trade, and space-related collaboration, as well as regional issues pertaining to security in and around South Asia.

The energy dialogue will address energy security issues, including the proposed Indo-Pakistani-Iranian gas pipeline and nuclear safety cooperation. Most importantly, participants are to discuss ways of integrating India into the global nuclear regime so as to address New Delhi's desire for renewed access to safeguarded nuclear fuel and advanced nuclear reactors.

The economic dialogue will aim at increasing US-Indian trade

and creating new constituencies in the USA with a stake in India's growing power and prosperity.

Of course, cultivating this new relationship with India carries several risks for the Bush administration. First, supporting India's acquisition of nuclear and space technology could undermine the international non-proliferation regime. While providing such technologies would give New Delhi incentives to control outward proliferation in perpetuity and join with the USA in interdicting proliferation wherever it occurs worldwide, Washington cannot simply jettison the global non-proliferation regime that it has assiduously built over the last several decades.

Instead, the administration is faced with the challenge of how to selectively apply this regime in practice, spawning what Richard Haass once termed "a proliferation of proliferation policies", in which countries are treated differently based upon their value to the USA.

Given India's importance for the success of US non-proliferation goals and other geopolitical objectives, treating New Delhi as an exception to the strictures of the non-proliferation order is long overdue.

Second, the new administration strategy carries with it the risk of provoking China, which could view closer US-India ties as a means of polite containment. This is another issue Washington will have to manage prudently – but without apology.

The USA should always consider the new US-Indian ties in terms of its own interests, rather than in the light of potential Chinese displeasure.

In fact, given the violent history of rising powers, the USA might need partnerships with other Asian states to counter growing Chinese capabilities, which even today directly threaten the USA and its allies.

Deepened relations with Japan, India, and key allies in Southeast Asia will create struc-

tural constraints that may discourage Beijing from abusing its growing regional power. Even as Washington attempts to preserve good relations with Beijing – and encourages these rimland states to do the same – cultivating ties with these nations may be the best way to prevent China from dominating Asia in the long-term.

These dangers assume that the administration's new strategy becomes too successful for its own good. But the far greater and more likely danger is that the enhanced US-India relationship could peter out and atrophy.

It is not lost on policy makers in New Delhi that, although certainly welcome, the latest US pronouncements about its desire to boost Indian power remain – at least for the moment – statements of intent rather than concrete policy objectives.

Cynics within the Indian Cabinet have privately pointed out that, while the new US approach provides Islamabad with airplanes, all that New Delhi has received thus far are eloquent words.

Despite US willingness to co-produce military equipment, Indian leaders expect more liberal access to a variety of civilian technologies, such as nuclear energy, satellite components, and advanced industrial equipment.

If the USA fails to provide India with such forms of assistance – capabilities it needs to increase its rate of economic growth and to become a major power – New Delhi's current tolerance of US defence sales to Pakistan could quickly change into outright opposition.

A rupture in relations with India would be a grievous failure because the new Bush strategy has the potential to be truly revolutionary both in Asia and beyond.

In the past, relations between the USA, India, and Pakistan were largely zero-sum. The events of 25 March, however, ushered in a new era in which the USA can engage India and Pakistan simultaneously, instead of favouring one at the other's expense.

This new framework is not only good for American interests – it has yielded a visionary bilateral defence framework agreement – but also for the security of one of the most dangerously divided areas of the world.

When Bush administration officials announced that America would support India's rise to world power status, they also asserted, "We understand fully the implications, including military implications, of that statement." Let's hope that they do.

(Reprinted with permission from YaleGlobal Online [http://yale-global.yale.edu] a publication of the Yale Center for the Study of Globalization.)

No US arms yet for Nepal

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, May 11.
— Unlike India, Washington has remained firm about its suspension of military aid to Nepal. Washington's decision was conveyed by the US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, Ms Christina Rocca, to King Gyanendra during a meeting here today.

Ms Rocca, who winded up her three-day Kathmandu visit today, told reporters before her departure that though USA regarded the lifting of the state of emergency on 29 April as a "good first step, more things need to be done". They include releasing political detainees, restoring civil liberties and lifting curbs on the media.

The announcement will put additional pressure on the government that was expecting a favourable decision from Washington.

12 MAY 2005

12 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

Bush 'excited' with Indo-US ties

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON, April 14. — External affairs minister Mr Natwar Singh today had a 30-minute meeting with US President George W Bush, who said he was "extremely excited" about the state of Indo-US relations.

Mr Bush said he was "extremely excited" and "pleased" with the state of India-US relations, foreign secretary Mr Shyam Saran told reporters here after the meeting. Mr Bush said he was going to use the next four years of his second term to further strengthen these relations to take them to a "much higher level," Mr Saran added.

The US President expressed admiration for India for the talents of its people and for its being a "flourishing democracy" of one billion people of different backgrounds. He spoke about India as a global power with which the United States wants to work very closely together for

Non-committal on UNSC bid

WASHINGTON, April 14. — The USA tonight said it supported the positive trends in India's global role but remained non-committal on backing Delhi's bid for a permanent membership in the UNSC. At a joint press conference with Mr Natwar Singh, Secretary of State Ms Condoleezza Rice said Washington believed that UNSC reforms should be viewed in the context of broader UN reforms and the USA was having discussions with a number of partners on the issue. — PTI

common good, for world peace, and for mutual economic benefit, Mr Saran said.

In this context, Mr Natwar Singh and Mr Bush discussed the issue of energy and Mr Bush told Mr Singh that both countries were going to face the challenges in this sector together. He said India and the USA need to work together in this particular area, which would include civilian nuclear cooperation.

Statesman News Service

CHANDIGARH, April 14. — In a significant statement prior to the visit of Gen. Pervez Musharraf, defence minister Mr Pranab Mukherjee today charged Pakistan with having "double-standards" on terrorism and said the terror infrastructure in Pakistan was still intact despite the thaw in bilateral ties.

"Pakistan is having double standards on terrorism as on one side it is saying something else and on the other it is abetting terrorism in the name of religion in J&K," Mr Mukherjee said here today. Speaking at a seminar on *Peace Perspectives In South and South East Asia — Challenges and Opportunities*, at Punjab

Pranab slams Pak's double-standards

University, the defence minister said the security forces were behind the decline in cross-border infiltration in J&K and a large number of terrorists were ready at "the launching pads" waiting to cross over to India. "Infiltration attempts are still on and the terrorists are being given special training to negotiate the border fence," he said.

Casting aspersions on the role played by Pakistan in curbing terrorism, he added: "Double standards on terrorism cannot be itful." Mr Mukherjee, however, said ongoing composite dialogue between India and Pakistan brightened the prospects of peace and stability in the entire region.

Gen. Musharraf is to be in Delhi on a three-day visit on April 14.

No time-frame on Kashmir: Natwar

NEW DELHI, April 14. — In an interview to a weekly magazine, external affairs minister Mr K Natwar Singh has said that it would not be prudent to set any time frame for the resolution of the Kashmir issue and asserted that there is no question of taking Islamabad off the hook on cross-border terrorism. He emphasised that any discussion on Kashmir must be focussed "first and foremost on the need to end cross-border terrorism and dismantling the infrastructure of terrorism across the LoC". In Islamabad, Pakistan foreign minister Mr KM Kasuri, however, said that only a "constructive" approach could help make progress on Kashmir. — PTI

13 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

US clears F-16s to Pak

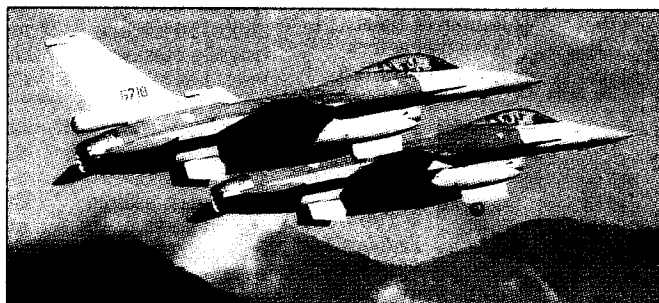
Bush Calls PM To Convey Decision. India To Get Nuke Technology

By Indrani Bagchi/TNN

New Delhi: The US cleared the sale of F-16 fighter aircraft to Pakistan. But it did one better for India by offering more sophisticated multi-role combat aircraft (latest versions of F-16s and F-18s), nuclear energy and missile defence systems. More importantly, the US made it clear that it wants to help India become a global power of the 21st century.

In a coordinated move, US President George Bush called Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday evening, briefing him on his decision. It followed a call by secretary of state Condoleezza Rice to external affairs minister Natwar Singh. In Washington, Rice briefed US Congress of Bush's decision to offer India the licence to produce versions of fighters more sophisticated than the F-16s and sell nuclear technology to India. The US decisions were announced at the noon briefing in the US state department.

The scale of US cooperation with India is on a qualitatively more evolved level. Nevertheless, India's initial response was still one of great disappointment, with the PM putting it across to Bush in no uncertain terms. The ministry of external affairs in a statement late on Friday night said a US team would be in India soon to discuss participation by US companies for coproduction of



Islamabad hails move

Islamabad: Hailing the US decision to sell F-16 fighter jets as a "red letter day" for its air force, Pakistan on Saturday said it did not nurture any aggressive designs against any country.

"Pakistan does not foster any aggressive designs against any country, but will continue to maintain minimum level of deterrence needed to defend our homeland," Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said, referring to India's concerns on the sale of F-16s to Islamabad.

"We have no aggressive designs but will protect the country's integrity at all costs," he said addressing armed forces personnel at Risalpur. "Pakistan believes in peace and wishes to live in harmony with its neighbours."

Aziz said the US decision was "very important" as a strong and professional air force was vital in determining the outcome of a conflict. He said the Pakistan government believed that its armed forces should have credible equipment.

As soon as the announcement was made in Washington on Friday night, Pakistan minister for information and broadcasting Sheikh Rashid Ahmed appeared on most of the TV channels to welcome it. He said India should have no objection over the supply of F-16 fighter planes to Pakistan as New Delhi was also offered the same aircraft in larger numbers. "This step will help improve the US image in the eyes of people of Pakistan," Ahmed said. PTI

125 fighter jets needed by India. The US decision to grant India access to nuclear technology reflects an understanding of India's growing energy requirements, said MEA spokesman. It also implies an acceptance of India as a responsible nuclear power.

The F-16s to Pakistan will not adversely affect India's defence preparedness. It was in the 1980s that Pakistan used the aircraft as a delivery vehicle for nuclear weapons. But today, with long range missiles that fear doesn't exist. The Indian Su-30 fighters, which showed to advantage against the F-16s recently, are generally regarded as superior aircraft. The F-16s that Pakistan will be getting are hardly known to be top of the line. And with F-18s and maybe even the joint strike fighter available for New Delhi the India-Pak equation will look very different.

India had been reconciled to this eventuality since October 2004, when it was clear that US sale of F-16s to Pakistan was definitely in the pipeline. Sustained diplomacy ensured that India came away with substantial gains.

However, the UPA government has a tough task defending itself against the charge of diplomatic failure. Since the supply of F-16s has been the benchmark of India's lobbying in the US, it will have a lot of explaining to do. This will also constrain it from celebrating the obvious gains for India.

27 MAR 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 MAR 2005

Pak gets F-16s, India gets to make them & more

Nilova Roy Chaudhary
New Delhi, March 26

PAKISTAN WILL get more F-16s from the US but India has got much, much more. India will get to co-produce 126 aircraft, including F-16s and F-18s, with US firms Lockheed Martin and Boeing. US state department sources have indicated. The aircraft will be produced in India and built to meet Indian specifications.

America has never before sold Boeing's land and carrier-based F-18s — that is, F/A-18E/F Super Hornets — to any country, even

to its allies in Nato.

At around 7.15 pm on Friday, when President George W. Bush called up Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and conveyed his administration's decision to supply the remaining 28 F-16s to Pakistan, Singh reportedly expressed his "great disappointment".

But Bush told Singh that Indo-US relations were being raised several notches to a new high and asked him to watch out for what the US state department would shortly be saying.

Other than offering India F-16s and F-18s, the state depart-

ment announced that the US would be supplying nuclear fuel energy reactors. This is the first time after the first Pokhran blasts of May 1974 that the US is renewing its co-operation with India in this field.

India has welcomed these gestures, seen as a departure from previous US policy. "The decision by the US administration to move forward on nuclear energy cooperation is welcome and reflects an understanding of India's growing energy requirements," the external affairs ministry spokesman said.

Defence minister Pranab Mukherjee told reporters: "Naturally, we will discuss the proposals and if military aircraft and other weapons, needed for our national interest, are available from the US, we will certainly consider them."

At its press briefing, the state department said several "key collaborative ventures", agreed upon in principle during the recent visit of US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice, had been okayed. These include the creation of a high-level strategic partnership to be headed by Rice

on the US side. Key areas would include co-operation in defence and energy, including civilian nuclear energy. This will go beyond NSSP (Next Step in Strategic Partnership), it was indicated.

State department officials also said Washington is weighing an expansion of its strategic partnership with India, with cooperation on a range of economic, commercial and security issues, including missile defence. The goal is to help India become a major world power.

More reports on Page 3



DEFENCE BONANZA

India will co-produce 126 aircraft, including F-16s & F-18s, with US firms Lockheed Martin and Boeing. The aircraft will be produced in India and built to meet Indian specifications

US will supply nuclear fuel energy reactors, cooperating in this field for the first time since the 1974 Pokhran blasts

High-level strategic partnership for co-operation in defence & energy, including civilian nuclear energy. Could be expanded to include missile defence

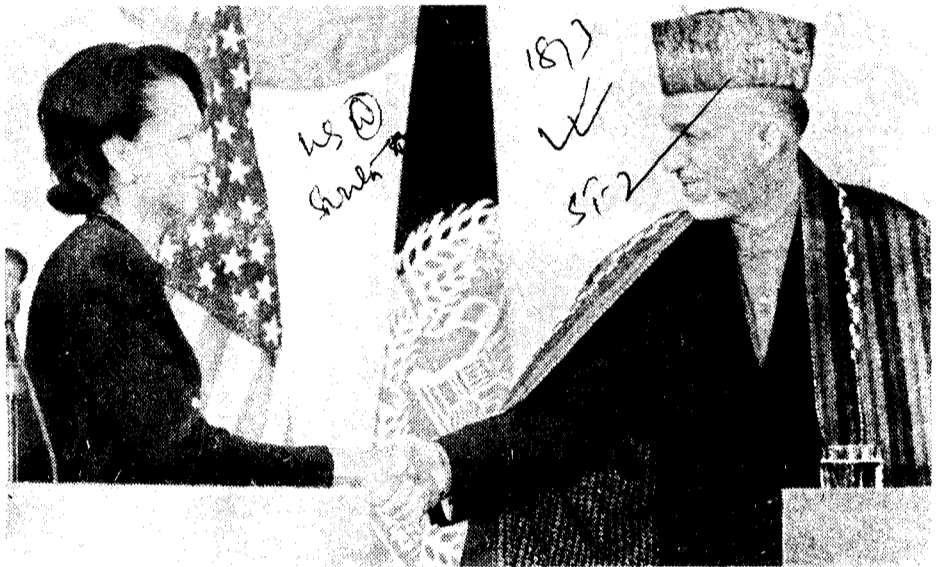
Rice calls for end to Kashmir terror

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, March 17. — Calling for end to violence and terrorism in Kashmir, US Secretary of State Ms Condoleezza Rice today ruled out chances of any American mediation to resolve Kashmir issue and said that Washington was impressed by the progress of the Indo-Pak composite dialogue process.

"We also talked about the need to end violence and terrorism in this (Kashmir) area. There are number of issues that needs to be dealt with by all the parties and I think, we have been very clear to Pakistan, to India to what their responsibilities to be," she said in a joint press conference with Pakistan foreign minister, Mr Khurshid Kasuri.

Asked whether bilateralism worked to resolve the Kashmir issue, Ms Rice said Indo-Pak talks were certainly helped in bringing down the tensions and made progress. "In principle I do believe that bilateral discussions between the parties can not only serve to resolve tensions but are serving to resolve tensions... The USA said it can help in anyway it can but it can never do so in an anyway that tries to surpass the goodwill and the intention and the commitment of the parties. We have been very impressed by the



JOINT VENTURE FOR PEACE: President Karzai greets Ms Rice in Kabul on Thursday. — AFP

China frees Muslim dissident

BEIJING, March 17. — Ahead of US Secretary of State Ms Condoleezza Rice's visit here, China today released a high-profile Muslim woman political dissident and allowed her to go on exile to the USA.

Ms Rebiya Kadeer (58), an ethnic-Uighur from north-western region of Xinjiang, was released and allowed to fly to the USA for "medical treatment", CNN reported. She was accompanied by a US diplomat. Ms Rice was expected here on 20-21 March.

In another development, the US government has decided against proposing a UN resolution critical of China's human rights policy, officials said today. The officials said US representatives advised other delegations to the 53-nation UN Human Rights Commission of the decision. — AP

Composite Dialogue process and want to see it continue," she said

Expressing satisfaction over Indo-Pak relations, she said, "I want to give my encouragement to the parties for continuing progress on that front. It is extremely important for the region that they con-

tinue efforts to improve relations to remove barriers and improve interaction between people."

She declined to get dragged into issues of conflict like Baglihar and Kishenganga projects and said "as per specific issues between India and Pakistan I am not prepared to comment".

Afghan polls delayed

Afghan parliamentary elections will be held in September, President Hamid Karzai said today, confirming that logistical troubles have postponed a vote supposed to complete the country's transition to democracy, AP adds from Kabul.

Mr Karzai announced the delay during Ms Rice's first visit to Afghanistan, and insisted that security was improving, despite a bomb attack which killed five civilians far to the south. Ms Rice said the USA would support Afghanistan as it prepares for the vote and called its re-emergence from years of war an inspiration to the world. She also promised US help in fighting the opium cartel.

U.S. conveys concern on gas project

● No problems with Iran: India

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, MARCH 16. The U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, said today that Washington had conveyed its "concerns" to New Delhi on the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project. In public comments, she said that American views on Iran were very well known.

"Our Ambassador [to India] has made statements in that regard. So, those concerns are well known to India. We need to look at the broader question of how India meets its energy needs over the next several decades ... we believe that a broad energy dialogue should be launched with India because the needs are there," she said after talks with the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh.

India's energy needs

Asked if the American position amounted to "interference", Mr. Singh said the Petroleum Minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar, was holding talks on the project with his Iranian and Pakistani counterparts. India's energy needs were growing exponentially and New Delhi had traditional, good relations with Teheran. "We expect Iran will fulfil all its obligations with regard to the NPT [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty]. We have no problems of any kind with Iran ...," Mr. Singh said.

Dr. Rice, who also met the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, the United Progressive Alliance chairperson, Sonia Gandhi, and the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, gave a general response when asked if Washington would support India's entry into the United Nations Security Council as a permanent member.

On Nepal, both Dr. Rice and Mr. Singh called for the immediate restoration of democracy. Stating that there had been outstanding cooperation between India and the U.S. on Nepal, Dr. Rice said this showed that they had regional as well as global responsibilities.

She commended India's response to the post-tsunami situation and said that New Delhi

had mobilised its ships in 48 hours. "That's extraordinary. It shows that India's potential is very great to help resolve humanitarian and other needs for the world," she said at the brief joint press interaction with Mr. Singh at Hyderabad House.

On the sale of military hardware to Pakistan, including F-16s, Dr. Rice, who left for Islamabad in the afternoon, said that no announcements were expected during her visit.

In response to the same question, Mr. Singh said that India had expressed concerns on the defence issue and how these might create complications. He, however, added that these were not serious differences of opinion.

"There are one or two items on which we don't agree — our relationship has now reached a maturity where we can discuss these things frankly — our views on F-16s [to Pakistan] are well known," he maintained.

U.N. reforms

Dr. Rice said the U.S. was at the beginning of discussions on the issue of U.N. reforms, including possible changes in the composition of the Security Council. Dr. Rice said: "We have agreed to be in touch with India and other countries about how these discussions are going," she said, adding that "countries like India" had emerged on the international scene as major economic and political players.

Mr. Singh said India and the U.S. would have a sustained dialogue on the issue. "Naturally, we think that the world of 2005 has nothing to do with the world of 1945."

On India-Pakistan issues, Dr. Rice said the U.S. admired the fact that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Pervez Musharraf had been able to continue their dialogue even after a change of government in New Delhi.

Both Dr. Rice and Mr. Singh said that "phase two" of the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP), relating to high technology transfer, would conclude soon.

Editorial: Page 10
News Analysis: Page 11

PM, Rice talk of common friends

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 16

EVEN CONDOLEEZZA Rice, the business-like visiting US secretary of state, could feel the cricket fever. Realising the importance of cricket in Indo-Pak diplomacy, Rice told Union external affairs minister K. Natwar Singh, "I am going to make a promise to the foreign minister right now and that is that I will even try to understand cricket."

Rice didn't confine herself to serious matters of state even with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

They exchanged notes and chatted about old friends from Stanford University, including Anne Krueger, now with the IMF. Singh told Rice that Krueger had once offered him a job to teach at Stanford.

Upon which the Secretary of State, a former Dean at Stanford before she joined the Bush administration, told the Prime Minister she was sure Stanford would be delighted to offer him a visiting fellowship any time he so desired. Rice also told Singh that President (George W) Bush was keen the Pri-



Condoleezza Rice with Natwar Singh in New Delhi.

me Minister visit the US in July, an invitation the Prime Minister "gladly accepted."

The "extremely warm and cordial" one-on-one meeting between the two, sought by Rice, was part of her whirlwind visit to this city, during which the only sight-seeing she managed was a trip to Humayun's Tomb.

But her very tight schedule (she left for Islamabad Wednesday afternoon) prevented Rice from partaking of the dessert (a "delectable" orange souffle) after the lunch hosted in her honour by external affairs minister, K. Natwar Singh at Hyderabad House.

Gyanendra's action a step away from democracy: U.S.

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 14. The Bush administration has said that the American Ambassador to Nepal, James F. Moriarty, is being asked to return to Washington for consultations. A press statement issued by the State Department spokesman, Richard Boucher, says Mr. Moriarty will be having meetings with officials as the United States along with its international partners ponders over the steps that will be taken to "support the Nepalese people's quest for democracy, peace, security and development."

Mr. Boucher said:

"We remain deeply troubled by developments in Nepal. King Gyanendra's dismissal of the government, declaration of a state of emergency, detention of politicians, human rights workers and students and the suspension of fundamental constitutional rights is a step away from Nepal's path toward democracy

"The King needs to restore and protect civil and human rights, promptly release those detained under the state of emergency and move quickly toward the restoration of civil liberties and multi-party democratic institutions under a constitutional monarchy.

"The United States supports a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic Nepal. The protection of civil and human rights and strengthening of multi-party democracy are key components of Nepal's progressing along this path. We call on those in Nepal who are committed to the country's future to engage in meaningful political discussions leading to national elections. "Those among the Maoists who wish to be a part of Nepal's future leadership must abandon their armed struggle and join the political mainstream through dialogue and peaceful means."

India, U.S. announce open skies agreement

WASHINGTON, JAN. 16. The United States and India have reached an open skies aviation agreement that will lead to more flights, lower fares and stronger economic ties between the two countries, the U.S. Transportation Secretary, Norman Y. Mineta has said. The announcement came yesterday, after three days of negotiations between Mr. Mineta and the Civil Aviation Minister, Praful Patel.

Mr. Mineta said the agreement meant the two countries "will be closer than ever before" and would begin "a new era where American and Indian consumers, airlines and economies can reap the rewards of cheaper flights, more choices and faster air service."

The agreement would strengthen commercial aviation in a number of ways, including more direct flights to serve the approximately two million passengers travelling between the two countries every year, he said in a statement.

The agreement would allow airlines from both countries to select routes and destinations based on consumer demand, providing for open routes, capacity, frequencies, designations, and pricing as well as opportunities for cooperative marketing arrangements.

It would include code-sharing with domestic Indian carriers to aid making reservations and giving a greater choice of flights. — AP

THE HINDU

17 JAN 2005