

Back channel diplomacy taking up proposals on Kashmir: Musharraf

B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf claimed on Thursday that the back channel diplomacy between Pakistan and India was looking at a number of proposals on resolution of Kashmir and as and when the ideas took concrete shape, they would be moved to the 'front channel.'

Addressing the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors in Lahore, Gen. Musharraf said confidence-building measures (CBMs) between India and Pakistan were moving ahead and Pakistan was trying to speed up the "process of dispute resolution" as well.

Gen. Musharraf claimed that the All Parties Hurriyat Conference supported the ideas of demilitarisation and self-governance on both sides of Kash-

mir. Islamabad insists that it has made formal proposals to New Delhi on the two subjects. However, India has maintained that the subjects have figured in the 'passing' and there has been no discussion on them.

The Pakistan President maintained that Pakistan has presented a number of ideas on Kashmir. "The back channel diplomacy between the two countries is taking up these and when

something concrete comes up, it would be brought to the front channel," he told the gathering.

On the raging controversy within the country on construction of big dams, Gen. Musharraf said the Government would take a judicious decision on construction of water reservoirs. Striking a tough posture against those opposed to big dams, he asserted that overlooking the vital issue in view of the growing shortfall

of the natural resource would amount to a betrayal of the nation. He also told the gathering that the Government was striving to evolve a consensus on the subject, favoured an open discussion on the issue and was prepared to extend constitutional and administrative guarantees to Sindh province.

"The water shortfall will gravely impact the agrarian sector and the 70 per cent of population living in rural areas as their very livelihood is dependent on the availability of water," he said and went on to add that Pakistan must deal with the issue strategically to have enough water for its agricultural and industrial growth. He said that the previous governments pushed the issue under the carpet but said the Shaukat Aziz Government was committed to taking a decision after developing a consensus.

Vajpayee announcement 'sad news'

KARACHI: Pakistan has said that the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee's announcement in Mumbai on Thursday that he would retire from active politics was sad news.

It lauded the peace efforts initiated by him.

"He was a simple but

matured politician who played a leading role in the peace process between the two countries," Pakistan Information Minister Sheikh Rashid told AFP on Friday.

"It is sad news. I must say that the peace process has slowed down after Mr. Vajpayee's tenure," he said.

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THE HINDU

India's comments an interference: Pakistan

B. Muralidhar Reddy

that comments from New Delhi amounted to interference in internal affairs of Pakistan and were contrary to spirit of the dialogue process. The spokesperson alleged that India often showed an unacceptable tendency to interfere in the internal affairs of its neighbours and said it was contrary to efforts aimed at

building an environment of trust, peace and stability in South Asia. "The statement is all the more surprising from the spokesman of India, a country that has long tried to suppress the freedom struggle of the Kashmiri people ...," the spokesperson said.

She alleged that India used force to quell unrest in different

parts of the country.

PTI reports from New Delhi:

A day after voicing concern at the Pakistan army's high-handedness in Balochistan, India refused to join issue with Pakistan, which reacted sharply to the comments.

"A counter reaction? No. I

think I made the point that I had to," External Affairs Ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna told reporters when he was asked to comment on Islamabad's statement. New Delhi had on Tuesday voiced "concern" over the spiralling violence in Balochistan and asked Pakistan to "exercise re-

Balochistan: 'India's remark unwarranted'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, DEC 28

REACTING sharply to India's comments on the situation in Balochistan, Pakistan on Wednesday said they were tantamount to interference in its internal affairs and "contrary" to efforts aimed at bringing peace and stability in South Asia.

New Delhi had on Tuesday noted with "concern" the spiralling violence in Balochistan and the heavy military action there and had asked Pakistan to "exercise restraint" and address the grievances of the people of the region through peaceful discussions.

Rejecting the Indian statement as "unwarranted" and "baseless", Pakistan foreign office spokesperson Tasleem R Aslam said, "India often shows an unacceptable proclivity to interfere in the internal affairs of its neighbours. Such a tendency is contrary to efforts aimed at building an environment of trust, peace and stability in South Asia."

The war of words has re-surfaced after several months and comes weeks before the foreign secretaries of the two countries meet to carry forward the composite dialogue process.

Pak Baglihar deadline extended by a month

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank-appointed neutral expert on the Baglihar dam issue has extended by a month the December 31 deadline given to Pakistan to answer technical questions on the hydropower project. The neutral expert Raymond Lafitte extended the deadline because Pakistan "did not" receive certain data from India, which was imperative to prepare replies to technical questions, official sources said here, adding, however, that India has sent Pakistan most of the technical data on the project. —PTI

"The statement is all the more surprising from the spokesman of India, a country that has long tried to suppress the freedom struggle of the Kashmiri people and has a record of systematic and serious human rights violation" in Jammu and Kashmir, the Pakistani spokesperson said.

In further caustic remarks, she said the "heavy handed" methods and "use of force" by India to "quell the ongoing unrest especially in the North East of the country and the widespread violence afflicting many of its parts are well known and need no comment".

She said Pakistan was "also intrigued by this provocative statement at this time when the two countries are engaged in the peace process to address all issues including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. The (Indian) statement tends to vitiate the current atmosphere of improved relations that accords with the wishes of the peoples of the two countries," she said.

External Affairs Ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna had said on Tuesday that "the government of India has been watching with concern the spiralling violence in Balochistan and the heavy military action, including the use of helicopter gunships and jet fighters by the government of Pakistan to quell it". To a question.

"We hope the government of Pakistan will exercise restraint and take recourse to peaceful discussions to address the grievances of the people of Balochistan," he said.

According to Pakistani media reports, the Pakistani Army has launched a massive crackdown on tribesmen in Balochistan killing dozens of people. The army has used helicopter gunships in the operations which began on December 18.

28 DEC 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

Iran gas to fuel India by 2010

Tehran to host first trilateral meeting in February next year

AGENCIES

New Delhi, December 17

ON SATURDAY, India and Pakistan agreed to begin construction of the over \$7 billion Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline by mid-2007 so that the gas flows by the end of 2010.

Initially, India will draw 60 million metric standard cubic metres per day (mmscmd) from the over 2,100-km-long pipeline and ramp it up to 90 mmscmd in the next two to three years while Pakistan would start with 30 mmscmd and double its output by 2013, said Pakistan's petroleum secretary Ahmad Waqar.

The three countries, which till now have been holding only bilateral discussions, will for the first time hold a trilateral meeting in Tehran in February 2006. The meeting would address issues like an integrated feasibility study, project structure and tripartite framework agreement.

"The project structure (how the project

progress. This project is essential for the economic growth and energy security of both countries." He added that a technical sub-working group would be set up to sort out issues like transportation tariff, transit fee payable to Pakistan, pipeline route and pricing mechanism.

Pakistan, he said, would appoint consultants in two weeks time to advise it on financial, technical, legal and commercial issues pertaining to the project.

India has already appointed financial and technical consultant and will in the next few days appoint a legal consultant.

Without the appointment of consultants, Islamabad did not respond to India's suggestion that the project be built and operated by state-owned companies of the three countries along with an international firm. Iran, meanwhile, has identified certain blocks of gas in the gigantic South Pars field in the Persian Gulf, which would be dedicated to the proposed pipeline project.

Deal with Pak

- Construction of the pipeline to begin by 2007
- Gas will start flowing into India and Pakistan by 2010
- India will get 60 mmscmd of gas per day initially
- Trilateral meet between India, Pak and Iran in February, 2006

will be built and operated) and the Framework Agreement by India, Pakistan and Iran will be finalised by April 2006," said petroleum secretary S.C. Tripathi at the end of the two-day meeting of the Indo-Pak Joint Working Group on the project.

Waqar, who led the Pakistani side in the third JWG, said, "We have achieved good

Prepare roadmap for better ties with Pakistan: Panel

A PARLIAMENTARY committee has asked government to prepare the roadmap for improving relations with Pakistan with the "greatest care" and not hasten the pace in an unrealistic manner in view of concerns of the international community over perpetual tension between the two nuclear powers. "Every care should be taken to protect the vital interests of the nation. The fact that the terrorist training camps inside Pakistan's territory are still operating though infiltration into Jammu and Kashmir has come down considerably points to the grave danger inherent in the situation," it said. "The Government of India should not allow itself to be taken by surprise at any stage," the Standing Committee on External Affairs said in its report presented in Parliament.

PTI, New Delhi

ইরান-পাকিস্তান-ভারত গ্যাস পাইপলাইন, কাজ শুরু ২০০৭

নয়াদিল্লি, ১৭ ডিসেম্বর: ইরান থেকে পাকিস্তান হয়ে ভারত পর্যন্ত গ্যাস পাইপলাইন নির্মাণে রাজি হয়েছে ভারত ও পাকিস্তান। ৭০০ কোটি ডলারেও বেশি এই প্রকল্পের কাজ শেষ করা হবে ২০০৭ সালের মাঝামাঝি, যাতে ২০১০-এর শেষাংশে ইরান থেকে গ্যাস আসতে আরম্ভ করে।

আজ এখানে ওই পাইপলাইন নিয়ে পাক-ভারত যৌথ কর্মিগোষ্ঠীর আলোচনার পর এ কথা জানান ভারতের পেট্রোলিয়াম সচিব এস সি ত্রিপাঠী। তিনি জানান, এই প্রকল্পে জড়িত তিনটি দেশ এখনও পর্যন্ত পরস্পরের সঙ্গে ত্রিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকই চালিয়ে আসছে। তবে আগামী বছর ফেব্রুয়ারিতে তেহরানে তিন দেশের

মধ্যে এক সঙ্গে বৈঠক হবে। ত্রিপাঠী বলেন, “পাইপলাইন প্রকল্পের নির্মাণ ও চালনা সংক্রান্ত চুক্তি এবং ভারত-পাকিস্তান-ইরান তিন দেশের মধ্যে প্রয়োজনীয় চুক্তি ২০০৬-এর এপ্রিল নাগাদ চূড়ান্ত হয়ে যাবে।” আলোচনায় পাক দলের নেতা সে দেশের পেট্রোলিয়াম সচিব আহমদ ওয়াকার জানান, গ্যাস পরিবহণ শুরু, পাকিস্তানের মধ্য দিয়ে গ্যাস যাওয়ার জন্য মাসুল, পাইপলাইনের রুট এবং গ্যাসের মূল্য নির্ধারণ ইত্যাদি বিষয়ে ফয়সালার জন্য একটি উপকর্মিগোষ্ঠী গঠন করা হবে। আগামী মার্চে যৌথ কর্মিগোষ্ঠীর পরবর্তী বৈঠকের আগে উপকর্মিগোষ্ঠী প্রতি মাসে আলোচনায় বসবে। — পি টি আই

ANADARAZ PATRIKA

India, Pakistan agree on gas pipeline project

Tripartite meeting "may be held" in Iran

Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI: India and Pakistan agreed on Saturday to give a final shape to the project structure and framework of the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline by April 2006, a joint statement issued after two days of talks said.

A tripartite meeting of three Joint (IPI) Working Groups "may be held" early next year in Teheran to discuss issues such as an integrated feasibility study, project structure and a tripartite framework agreement.

It was decided to form a technical sub-group that would meet "at least once a month" to discuss issues such as the quantum of gas, pipeline route, transportation tariff and system configuration.

The issue of transit fees would be tackled as per international practices. There had been an exchange of views on this, the release said.

Initial estimate

At a press conference, Petroleum Secretaries of both countries S.C. Tripathi and Ahmad Waqar said the initial estimate was 90 million cubic metres of gas - 30 million for Pakistan and 60 million for India.

They pointed out that the project was being pursued despite objections from the United States. Mr. Tripathi said Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had clarified the issue in Parliament. "We are going by what the Prime Minister said."

LNG deal with Iran

Asked about the five million tonne a year liquefied natural gas (LNG) deal between India

• Project being pursued despite U.S. objections

• Pakistan favours a "central" route through the district of Rahimyar Khan

• "Pakistan will catch up shortly with India"

and Iran, he said this was a "legally enforceable contract" between companies of the two countries.

Clearance from Iran's High Economic Council was awaited.

Some delay "here and there" did not pose a problem. "We wanted a team to be set up to discuss the contract details," he said.

"Pro-poor project"

Mr. Ahmad Waqar said the two sides had made progress in the talks on the project. Construction of the overland pipeline could begin in 2007 and end by 2010.

A consultant would soon be appointed for the "pro-poor gas-oline project." He said there had been some delay but asserted that Pakistan would catch up shortly with India in appointment of a consultant.

On the pipeline route, he said Pakistan favoured a "central" route through the district of Rahimyar Khan.

Mr. Tripathi said India was comfortable either with this route or the one that ran along Pakistan coast.

Asked about the pipeline diameter, Mr. Tripathi said this was being discussed - there was even a possibility of having two pipelines.

Now bus to Lahore from Amritsar

Trial run begins; the first bus from Lahore will arrive on December 23

Sarabjit Pandher

CHANDIGARH: History was made along the Radcliffe, when the much-awaited trial run for the first-ever Amritsar-Lahore bus service began on Sunday morning, with a bus carrying nine passengers crossing over to Pakistan through the land route at Wagah.

The Immigrations officials at Wagah informed that the first nine aboard the bus christened "Punj-aab" included Secretary Punjab's Transport department A.K. Talwar and Director Narinderjit Singh, State Transport Commissioner Iqbal Singh Sidhu, Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar K.D.S. Bhullar and two drivers, besides two liaison officers and one Punjab Roadways official.

The 45-seater airconditioned bus, hired from a private company, began its historic journey from Youth Hostel, which has been designated as the international bus terminal for the service. The same bus would return on Monday morning.

A Punjab Roadways spokesman in Amritsar said the previous trial run of the bus scheduled for October 16 had to be postponed due to the earthquake which left a trail of destruction in Pakistan.

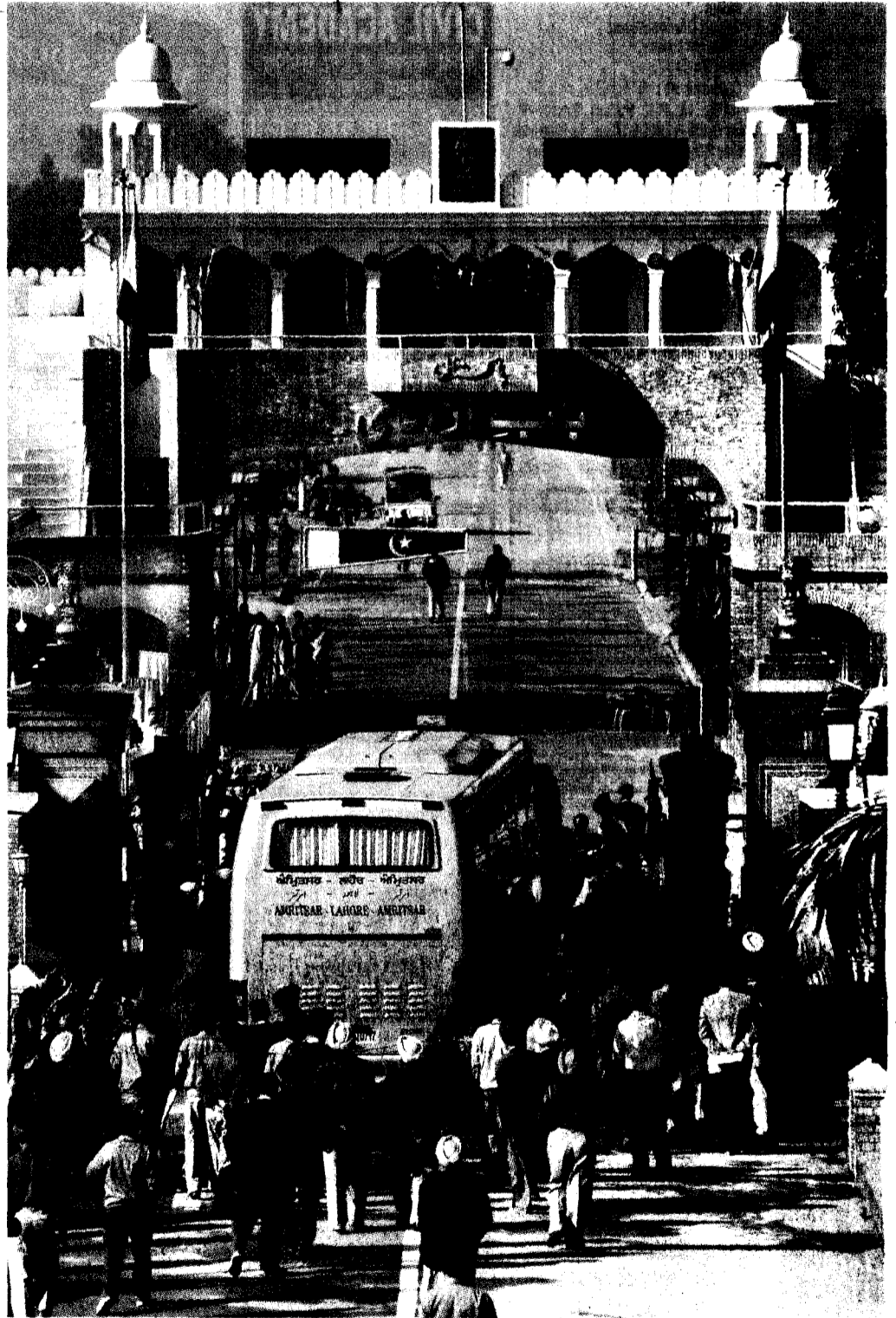
Regular service

The Punjab Government is hopeful that the trial run would be followed by regular service, which is scheduled to start on December 23 with the first bus arriving from Lahore. However, the first bus from Amritsar will depart on December 27. The State Government has requested Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to flag off the service from Amritsar.

An official of the administration told reporters in Amritsar that the service would run between the youth hostel at Amritsar and Gulberg at Lahore in Pakistan.

The Indian bus would depart every Tuesday and return the next day, while the Pakistani bus would arrive on Friday to depart on Saturday.

The One-way fare would be Rs. 750 in Indian currency and



HISTORIC LINK: The Amritsar-Lahore bus entering Pakistan at Wagah on Sunday. The two cities are being linked for the first time in nearly six decades. - PHOTO: AP

Rs. 900 in Pakistani.

The Indian Punjab Government would invest Rs. 2.70 crore

to buy four new buses dedicated to exclusively for the Amritsar-Lahore Bus Service. India would

be using a Volvo, bus which is air-conditioned and has all luxury facilities.

12 DEC 2005

Muzaffarabad bus service resumes

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25 passengers cross the Line of Control

Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR: The Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service resumed on Thursday with 25 people crossing the Line of Control (LoC) at the Kaman Post near Uri. While 20 crossed from the Indian side, five stranded passengers in Pakistan occupied Kashmir returned home after two months.

Official sources said the 20 passengers embarked on their journey from the Tourist Reception Centre at Salamabad near Uri as all of them belonged to the same area. While 16 freshers had applied for travel permits weeks ago, four passengers from PoK were stranded in this part of Kashmir after the October earthquake.

The bus, named "Caravan-e-Aman," could not be run from Srinagar on Thursday as none of the passengers had to board from here, said the sources.

"The crossing marked the resumption of the stalled bus service," Lt. Col. V.K. Batra, defence spokesman, told *The Hindu*. "The Indian passengers were taken up to the border in a bus," he said.

This is the first time that passengers using the bus service, launched on April 7 this year, crossed the LoC from this side. The last bus was run on the route on October 6. At Kaman, a bridge named "peace bridge," was damaged by the earthquake.

• 20 persons crossed over from India

• Five passengers stranded in PoK after the quake return home

Even as the Border Roads Organisation from the Indian side made the road motorable in record time, it took longer to do so on the other side as the damage was higher.

The passengers had to walk over a small footbridge to cross a small stream that serves as the Line of Control (LoC).

Around two dozen travellers from Kashmir who were trapped in PoK returned home on November 17 but no one crossed to the other side from the Indian side.

The civilian movement across the LoC has, however, commenced on four other points on Chakan Da Bagh, Taptani, Silikot and Teetwal.

On November 19, 24 civilians made the first crossover in Teetwal where the process will be repeated on December 3.

The opening of these points, which in future are likely to become a permanent feature, has brought relief to the thousands of people living in remote Poonch, Rajouri and also in Kupwara district, who had to travel a long distance to cross the LOC near the Kaman Post.

02 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

24 Indian civilians cross LoC

First of the five points opened for movement of people

Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR: India and Pakistan on Saturday opened the first of five points along the Line of Control for civilian movement. This is the first time civilians crossed the LoC after the launch of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service on April 7 this year.

Officials said 24 Indian citizens crossed the newly constructed foot suspension bridge over the Kishan Ganga river in Teetwal, around 170 km from Srinagar. They were warmly received by Pakistan Army officers. Top Army and civilian officials of the area on the Indian side were present.

Kishan Ganga also serves as the dividing line between the two parts of Kashmir. The bridge was laid by the Pakistan Army in a record time. The original bridge that existed in 1947 was damaged in the hostilities be-

tween the two countries.

The names of the civilians who crossed the LoC was cleared by both the Governments a few days back. They were eager to see their relatives across the LoC as they had no news of their kin after the October 8 quake. "Nothing is known about their welfare and all of us are worried," Zaman Ali, a retired teacher in Teetwal, told reporters. He, his wife and daughter left for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in search of his sister's five married daughters. "Though I do not have any idea where they live, I will locate them," he said. Za-

man, who last visited PoK in 1984 via Wagah, took with him a number of letters from his neighbours for their relatives.

Eighty-two-year-old Begum Jaan from Teetwal was the first to cross the bridge that was opened for the exchange of relief last week.

According to reports, no Pakistan civilians crossed over to this side on Saturday as the formalities for clearance on both sides are yet to be completed. Sources said that over 2,000 applications were pending on either side. "We are trying to expedite the clearance but it

may take some time," a senior official said. It is likely that the Silikot and Kaman Post points may be opened for civilian movement on November 24.

Search for passengers

On November 17, a number of Indians stranded in PoK crossed over to this side through a temporary link on the Kaman Post. The search for 19 more persons who crossed the LoC by the Muzaffarabad bus was on.

Eighteen persons from PoK who had entered this side before the quake were still here. "Many of them do not want to go back at this juncture," sources said.

The process of opening the points along the LoC began on November 7 and the exchange of relief was completed on November 16, with the opening of last point at Silikot-Hajipeer. The process, according to officials, will continue indefinitely.

● Formalities for Pakistan civilians to cross over not completed

● Over 2,000 applications pending on either side

● Two other points likely to be opened on November 24

A lifetime opportunity for India and Pakistan, says Musharraf

'Let success and happiness emerge from the ruins of this earthquake'

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U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan (right) and Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz greet each other as President General Pervez Musharraf looks on during the world conference of donors in Islamabad on Saturday. - PHOTO: AP

B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD: Suggesting that a resolution of the Kashmir issue could once and for all be New Delhi's "donation to Kashmir," Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf maintained here on Saturday that the October 8 earthquake presented a 'lifetime opportunity' for India and Pakistan to improve relations.

In his keynote address to the international donors' conference organised by Pakistan to raise resources for earthquake victims, Gen. Musharraf concluded his speech with detailed references to the opportunity provided to India and Pakistan by the earthquake to move into a new era of bilateral ties.

Amidst applause from the 300 delegates from 50-odd countries and international organisations,

Gen. Musharraf addressed virtually every section of society in India to convert the opportunity towards a settlement of the Kashmir issue.

Perhaps for the first time in history a *de facto* recognition was accorded by Pakistan to the Government of Jammu and Kashmir when Gen. Musharraf chose to seek the help of the "Government of Indian held Kashmir" for a resolution of the problem.

Expresses gratitude to India

In the course of a 50 minute presentation on the damage wrecked by the earthquake and the plans of his Government for rebuilding the lives of the 3.3 million people affected, Gen. Musharraf singled out India to express his sense of "gratitude" for the help to the quake victims.

Gen. Musharraf pointed from the podium to Minister of State for External Affairs E Ahamed in the conference hall as head of the Indian delegation, and said, "Knowing very well an Indian delegate is sitting here ... the earthquake has created a unique feeling of togetherness, of an urge to help each other within [the] people of Kashmir on both sides of [the] LoC and more than that within the people of India and Pakistan ... the urge to help each other. Therefore, I sincerely and genuinely believe that the challenge of this earthquake can be converted into an opportunity of [a] lifetime which was never available to India and Pakistan to improve relations," Gen. Musharraf said.

"[I] take this opportunity and forum to appeal to the President and the Prime Minister of India,

to the Government of India, to [the] entire opposition in India, to the people of India at large and the business community and more than anybody else I appeal to the media in India and also Pakistan, the Government of Indian-held Kashmir, APHC (Hurriyat Conference) and other Kashmiri groups ... let us together solve the Kashmir dispute once for all," he said.

Pakistan President said that fleeting opportunities did not come everyday and if leaders failed to grasp fleeting opportunities, they failed their nations and failed their people.

"Therefore, let success and happiness emerge from the ruins of this catastrophe, for the devastated people of Kashmir, let this be the Indian donation to Kashmir," he told the meet attended, among others, by U.N. Secretary-

General Kofi Annan.

Also, while talking about plans to rebuild quake-affected areas, Gen. Musharraf said the Indian steel industry could take part in the reconstruction efforts by providing corrugated sheets in a big way.

"We will import from anywhere. I know that India has promised \$25 million (for reconstruction). They have a big steel industry. Why not get corrugated sheets which is the mainstay of accommodation from your country," he said looking at Mr. Ahmed.

India, besides sending over 1,300 tonnes of relief material such as tents, blankets and food for quake victims, had pledged \$25 million in kind for the reconstruction at last month's U.N. Conference in Geneva.

Fourth relief centre opened

10 trucks of Indian relief material reach quake-affected PoK areas

Luv Puri

TATAPANI (LOC): As part of the process of softening the Line of Control to facilitate movement of quake-relief material to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), the fourth centre opened at Tatapani on Monday. Ten trucks carrying Indian relief material made their way to the affected areas. It was the first time in 58 years that a linkage point on this side of the LoC was established with southern PoK.

At 11 a.m. (IST), an Army team led by Colonel Deepak Saini marched towards the LoC and shook hands with Pakistan Army personnel led by Colonel Ali. Later revenue officials of Poonch district led by Deputy Commissioner Ramzan Thakur

and Hajeera (PoK) Deputy Commissioner Usman Qayani took charge of movement of relief material. From the Indian side 280 quintals of wheat, 210 quintals of rice and 180 quintals of tarpaulin sheets were distributed. In a symbolic gesture, the Pakistan team handed over food packets and water coolers.

No tension

Though nobody from this side was allowed to cross the LoC, unlike as on November 7 when the Chakan Da Bagh point was opened, there was no tension on either side. Scribes and officials from both sides interacted in Pahari language with ease. As on November 7, there were large crowds along the LoC at Chakrakyal village in Hajeera tehsil of

• **First time in 58 years that a linkage point on this side of the LoC was established with southern PoK**

• **Pakistan had earlier been reluctant to open the LoC point along southern PoK, namely Kotli-Mirpur tehsils**

PoK. To avoid a repetition of the scenes at Tetrinote village on November 7 when crowds started approaching the Indian side, the Pakistan Army and PoK police personnel took positions all along the LoC and monitored the movement of civilians.

At the same time many, mostly PoK politicians, were allowed to reach the fenced LoC after checking.

Mr. Usman Qayani said: "Earthquake has brought the two sides separated by the LoC closer to each other. We are

er three points along the LoC inhabited by the Pahari-speaking population, Monday's opening of the point, which adjoins the Kotli-Mirpur belt of PoK has some special significance in India-Pakistan ties.

Pakistan earlier showed reluctance to open the LoC point along southern PoK, namely Kotli-Mirpur tehsils, and many attribute it to anger in this belt against the Islamabad establishment.

The prime reason is the construction of Mangla dam on the Jhelum in the 1960s, which caused maximum displacement from this pocket. On Monday a number of political leaders from either side were allowed to meet each other.

THE HINDU

15 NOV 2005

15/11

Third relief point opened on LoC

'Relief for better tomorrow' packets carried across

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Shujaat Bukhari

TEETWAL: India and Pakistan on Saturday opened the third point on the Line of Control (LoC) for exchanging quake relief material. But people are not allowed to cross it and meet each other as is the case in Chaka Da Bagh and Kaman Post opened on November 7 and 9 respectively.

People on both sides lined up to watch the brief ceremony of "handshaking" by the Army and civil officers. Scores of civilians from Teetwal on the Indian side and Chillian on the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) side looked helpless as they could not inquire about each other's welfare.

It was at 11.30 a.m. when Col. Jayachandra Nair of 12 Kumaon met his Pakistani counterpart Lt. Col. Shahid of 5 Punjab half-way on the newly laid foot suspension bridge over the Kishan Ganga River, which is the dividing line between the two Kashmirs. After exchanging pleasantries, Kupwara Deputy Commissioner Abdul Majid Khanday shook hands with Raja Tariq, Deputy Commissioner of newly created Neelum district in PoK.

Superintendent of Police Kupwara Sunil Dutt met his Neelum counterpart Abdul Hamid; the last part of the ceremony saw exchanging of the list of relief material by Iftikhar Kakroo, Relief Officer, Tangdhar, with a Pakistani Army official Capt. Shuaib.

Carrying relief packets with stickers reading 'Relief for Better Tomorrow,' Indian porters crossed the bridge and those from Pakistan followed them.

"The process will continue till 3.30 p.m. and indefinitely till the rehabilitation is complete," Mr. Khanday said. "Lots of things are in stock. This is to address the humanitarian problem arisen after the quake."

Asked why the officials did not

cross the LoC as they did in Poonch and Kaman Post, he said: "It is as per an agreement between the two sides that no official except the porters will cross the bridge."

Before the process began, flags of Pakistan and PoK were hoisted on the hillock by Pakistani soldiers. Soon

The Tricolour, half-mast, fluttered on the Indian side.

Unlike the situation before ceasefire in November 2003, troops on both sides were waving at each other. Both the sides are in constant touch on a special telephone line established a few weeks back.

Although the Indian side offered the Pakistani officials to cross over and "have a cup of tea with us", they turned it down.

"I do not know they had some hesitation, but we were ready," said Col Nair.

On being part of the process, he said: "I feel delighted about. It is a rare occasion and I feel part of the peace process as such." Brig. S.S. Jog, Commander of Tangdhar brigade, supervised the exchange ceremony from a distance.

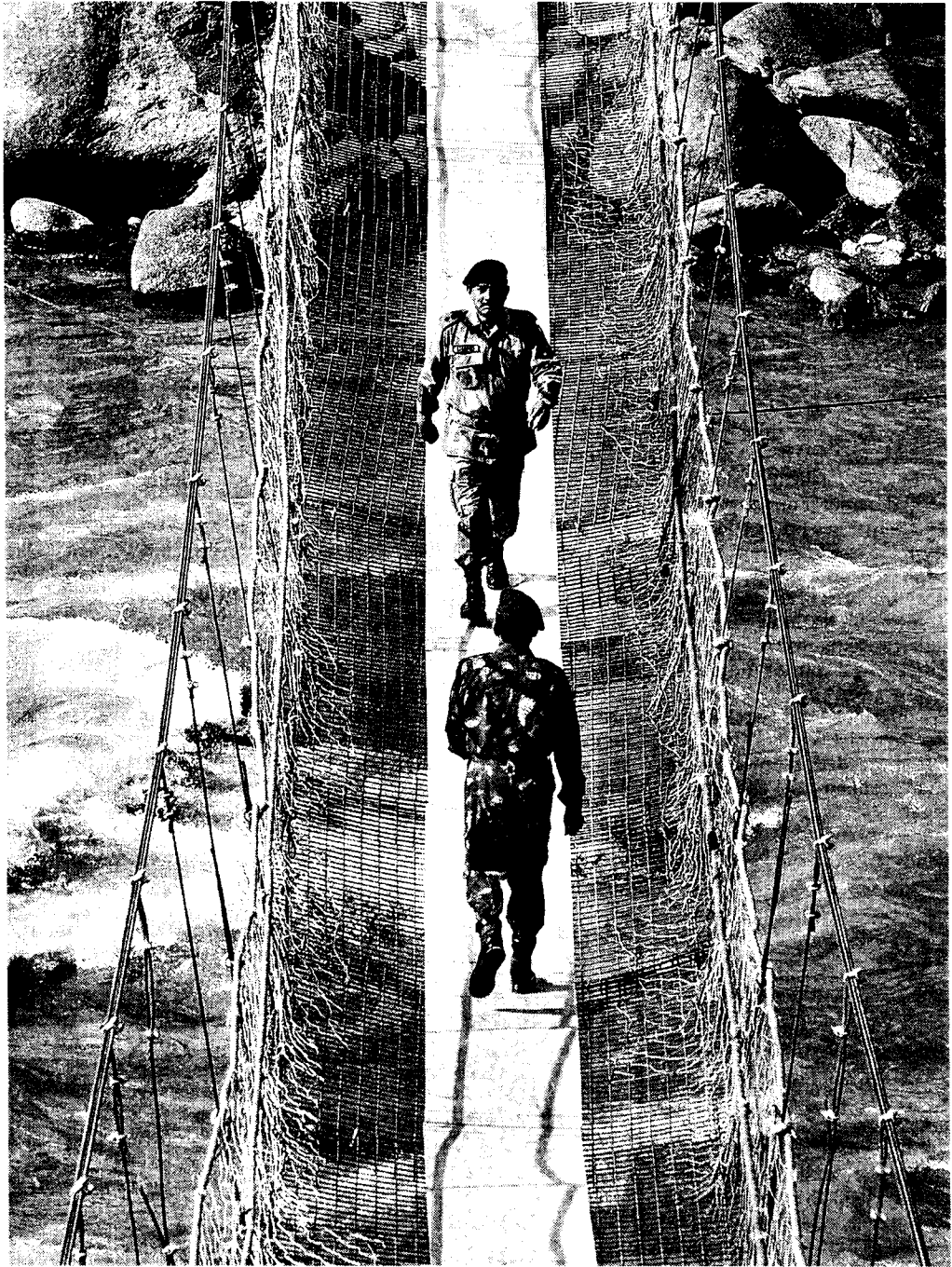
Ahead of the opening, Lt. Imran of Pakistan crossed the foot bridge and made the last inspection.

The 175 foot-long and three-foot wide bridge was constructed by the Pakistani Army in five days.

The delay in opening Teetwal was due to the construction of bridge, which had become a bone of contention between the two sides.

The only bridge, which existed way back in 1947 over this river, has since been damaged and a pillar on this side is the only reminder of it.

"That too is being reconstructed," an official said. A medical aid camp was also set up by the State Government.



WHEN NATIONS MEET: Pakistani Army officer Shahid and Indian Army officer J. Nair meet on a footbridge connecting Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir during a relief exchange at Teetwal on Saturday. - PHOTO: AFP

A good step for normalising ties, say civilians

Shujaat Bukhari

TEETWAL: The opening of the third Line of Control (LoC) post for the exchange of relief material was disappointing to thousands of people who were looking forward to meeting their relatives on the other side. However, a festive mood prevailed in this last village along the LoC and civilians termed it a "good step" towards normalisation of the situation.

Making a strong plea to not make the "process hostage to [the] likes and dislikes of the Governments," they said that

the LoC should not make much of a difference now as India and Pakistan had shown flexibility. Unlike the opening of the Kaman Post on November 9, people were allowed to witness the "ceremony."

Hundreds of residents here lined up on the banks of the Kishan Ganga and applauded as officers from both sides shook hands.

It was the same story in Chillian village across the river, which divides Kashmir. Civilians arrived in small buses, coloured jeeps and jungas.

Many people including children and women made desperate, unsuccessful attempts to wave at their relatives across the LoC. "Some of our relatives had told [us] on [the] phone that they would be coming today and we should also be here. But it is difficult to recognise them," said Nazakat Ali, whose two uncles live in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

He urged the two countries to treat the permanent resident certificates, issued by Deputy Commissioners on both sides, as travel documents to speed up

the process.

Several residents have applied for permission to cross the LoC but have to wait. Naseema Begum (45) said that she did not find much difference in the event. "Jaisa aap ko lagta hey Aisey hi Hamein Bhi Lagta (we feel as you do), she told *The Hindu*. Her daughter, Shamshada Akhter (20), says she wants to be the first to cross over to PoK. "My uncle is there. I want to see him," she said.

"Historic day"

Raja Gowhar Ali, a teacher in Teetwal, whose four uncles are

in PoK, said: "It will be the beginning of a very good mission. It is a historic day in our lives. We will be sending more relief in [the] coming days and hope that people start crossing [over] soon. We are very eager to go there and help our brothers," he said. His house was flattened by the October 8 quake. Deputy Commissioner Kupwara Abdul Majid Khanday said that the aim of opening the LoC was to facilitate the movement of people. "Soon the crossing will be thrown open to civilians," he said. He added that formalities had to be completed.

সন্ত্রাস চললে সেনা থাকবে নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখায়

অনিম্ম জালা • ঢাকা

১২ নভেম্বর: পাকিস্তান সীমান্তপার সন্ত্রাস এবং অনুপ্রবেশ বন্ধ না-করলে ভারত নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা থেকে সেনা সরাবে না বলে দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকে পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী শওকত আজিজকে স্পষ্ট জানিয়ে দিলেন ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ।

আজিজও অবশ্য পাট্টা মনমোহনকে জানান, কাশ্মীর আগের মতোই ভারত-পাকিস্তান দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কে 'মূল বিষয়' বা 'কোর ইস্যু' রয়েছে। কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধানকে সামনে রেখেই দু'দেশের সম্পর্কের অগ্রগতি সম্ভব। সম্ভব অন্যান্য সমস্যার সমাধান করা।

সকালে সার্কের উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে আজিজ প্রকাশ্যেই বলেছিলেন, ইসলামাবাদে সার্ক সম্মেলনের পরে ভারত-পাক সম্পর্কে উন্নতি হয়েছে। যাতে মনে হচ্ছিল, বরফ খানিকটা গলার দিকে। কিন্তু দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকে তিনি স্পষ্টই বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছেন, সম্পর্কের উন্নতির অগ্রগতি একান্ত ভাবেই নির্ভর করছে কাশ্মীর সমস্যার উপর। উল্লেখ্য, এই প্রসঙ্গেই ভেসে গিয়েছিল প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী ও পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের মধ্যে আগরা শীর্ষ বৈঠক।

মনমোহন পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে আজ আরও বলেছেন, "ভারত-পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে যে পারস্পরিক বিশ্বাসের ঘাটতি রয়েছে, শান্তিপ্রক্রিয়া এগিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়ার জন্য তা কমানো জরুরি। ক্রমাগত অনুপ্রবেশ, হিংসা এবং জঙ্গি হামলা ঘটতে থাকলেও ভারত কিন্তু শান্তিপ্রক্রিয়া থেকে সরে আসছে না।"

মনমোহন-আজিজের দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠক হয় মিনিট কুড়ি। তার আগে বাংলাদেশের প্রধানমন্ত্রী খালেদা জিয়ার সঙ্গেও দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠক করেন মনমোহন। সেই বৈঠকে ভারত-বাংলাদেশ সীমান্তকে শান্ত রাখা এবং বাংলাদেশের মাটিকে ভারত-বিরোধী উগ্রপন্থার কাজে ব্যবহৃত না-হতে দেওয়ার জন্য খালেদাকে আজিজ জানান মনমোহন। পশ্চিমবঙ্গের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্য অনবরতই ওই বিষয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে আজিজ জানিয়ে আসছেন। খালেদা-মনমোহন বৈঠকের পরে ভারতের বিদেশসচিব শ্যাম সারন যা বলছেন, তাতে বুদ্ধবাবু আশ্বস্ত হতে পারেন যে, মনমোহন তাঁর মনোভাব খালেদার কাছে স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন। সারন বলেন, "ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশের প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে বলেছেন, ভারত-বাংলাদেশের সম্পর্কের যতটা উন্নতি হওয়া প্রত্যাশিত ছিল, তা হয়নি। আরও বলেছেন, দু'দেশের কারও জমিই যেন পরস্পরের বিরুদ্ধে উগ্রপন্থার জন্য ব্যবহৃত বা উগ্রপন্থীদের আশ্রয় দেওয়ার জন্য ব্যবহৃত হয়। দু'দেশের সীমান্তও যেন শান্ত থাকে।"

পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে মনমোহনের দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকে নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা থেকে সেনা সরানো এবং ডুমকিলস্পার পরে নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা পুরো খুঁপে দেওয়ার প্রসঙ্গটি উঠেছিল। কিন্তু শওকত আজিজকে মনমোহন সাফ জানিয়েছেন, সীমান্তপার সন্ত্রাস এবং অনুপ্রবেশ বন্ধ না-হলে নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা বরাবর সেনা সরানোর কোনও প্রশ্ন ওঠে না। তা হলে ভারতীয় জনগণের উপরে তার বিরূপ প্রভাব পড়বে। ভারতের সাধারণ মানুষ তা মেনেও নেবেন না। সারনের কথায়, "পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে বলা হয়েছে, পারস্পরিক বিশ্বাস থাকলে শুধু নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা কেন, গোটা সীমান্ত থেকেই তো সেনা সরিয়ে নেওয়া যায়! আমাদের সে দিকেই এগোন উচিত।" আজিজ জবাবে মনমোহনকে বলেন, "পাকিস্তান যে কোনও ধরনের উগ্রপন্থারই বিরুদ্ধে এবং পাকিস্তানের মাটিকে ব্যবহার করে তারা কোনও উগ্রপন্থাকেই প্রস্রয় দেবে না।"

বৈঠকের পর পাক মিডিয়ার সামনে এসেছিলেন আজিজ নিজেই। সেখানেই তিনি স্পষ্ট করে দেন যে, কাশ্মীর-সমস্যাই যে এখনও মূল সমস্যা, তা তিনি আবার ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন। এবং সেই অবস্থান থেকে তাঁরা সরছেন না। আজিজ বলেন, "ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে আমার নয়াদিল্লিতে বিস্তারিত আলোচনা হয়েছে। আমি তাঁকে বলেছি, পাকিস্তান ওই ঘটনার কঠোর নিন্দা করেছে এবং করছে। ওঁর অভিযোগ নিয়ে আমরা

তদন্তও শুরু করেছি। কিন্তু এখনও নির্দিষ্ট কোনও তথ্যপ্রমাণ আমাদের হাতে আসেনি।"

ভারত-পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে যে আলোচনা শুরু হয়েছে, তার পরের পর্যায় হবে জানুয়ারিতে। সেখানে ভারত-পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে জাহাজ চলাচল এবং বন্দর ব্যবহার নিয়ে একটি চুক্তি স্বাক্ষরিত হওয়ার কথা রয়েছে। আজিজ বলেন, "ভারতীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী আমাকে বলেছেন, নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখায় আরও তিনটি কেন্দ্র খুব দ্রুত খুলে দেওয়া হবে। আমি তাঁকে বলেছি, পাকিস্তান অবাধ বাণিজ্যে বিশ্বাস করলেও ভারত করে না। পাকিস্তান থেকে ভারতে যাওয়া বিনিয়োগকারীরা সমস্যায় পড়েন। মনমোহন সমস্যার কথাটি মেনে নিয়ে ওই বিষয়টি সুরাহা করার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছেন।" পাকিস্তান-ভারত-বাংলাদেশ গ্যাস পাইপলাইন এবং ডলারের বিনিময়মূল্য নিয়েও তাঁদের মধ্যে আলোচনা হয়েছে বলে আজিজ জানিয়েছেন। কিন্তু সীমান্তপার সন্ত্রাস এবং অনুপ্রবেশ নিয়ে ভারতীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বক্তব্যের বিষয়টি নিয়ে বৈঠকের পরে মুখ খোলেননি আজিজ। মনমোহন-আজিজ আলোচনা হয়েছে শ্রীনগর-মুজফফরাবাদ বাস-সার্ভিস নিয়েও। শ্যাম সারন বলেন, "ওই বাসে যাতায়াতের জন্য আবেদন আসতে শুরু করেছে। আবেদনগুলি যাতে দশ দিনের মধ্যে কার্যকর করে ফেলা যায়, তা দেখা হবে।"



পাশে, তবু দূরে। মনমোহন ও জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। শনিবার ঢাকায়। — রয়টার্স

নেপালের রাজা ছাড়া বাকি সব রাষ্ট্রপ্রধানের সঙ্গেই মনমোহনের আজ দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠক হয়েছে। বৈঠক হয়েছে বাংলাদেশের প্রাক্তন প্রেসিডেন্ট এরশাদের সঙ্গেও।

সম্মেলনের প্রথম দিনের শেষে চিন নিয়ে ভারতের আপত্তি কিন্তু অটুট। আফগানিস্তানকে সার্কের সদস্য করার বিষয়ে প্রবল ইতিবাচক মনোভাব দেখালেও চিন প্রসঙ্গে ভারত স্পষ্ট জানিয়েছে, আপাতত চিন সার্কের সঙ্গে সহযোগিতার 'মউ' স্বাক্ষর করুক। তার পর তারা 'পর্যবেক্ষক' হবে না কি 'আলোচনার অংশীদার' হবে, তা নিয়ে আলোচনা হতে পারে। সারনের কথায়, "আফগানিস্তানকে আমরা সদস্য হিসাবে স্বাগত জানানোর জন্য প্রস্তুত হয়েই এসেছিলাম। শুনেছিলাম, চিন যে কোনও ভাবে সার্কের সঙ্গে যুক্ত হতে চায়। তাতে ভালই হবে বলে আমরা ভেবেছিলাম। স্ট্যান্ডিং কমিটির বৈঠক চলাকালীন

এর পর সাতের পাতায়

● জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের থেকে মুখ ফিরিয়ে মনমোহন... পৃঃ ৫

সেনা থাকবে

প্রথম পাতার পর চিনের কাছ থেকে পর্যবেক্ষক বা আলোচনার অংশীদার হওয়ার নির্দিষ্ট আবেদন আসে। তখন ঠিক হয়, বিষয়টির পদ্ধতিগত দিক নিয়ে আলোচনা হবে। সকলে একমত হলে সেটা হবে। তত দিন চিনের সঙ্গে সহযোগিতার সমঝোতাপত্র স্বাক্ষরিত হয়ে থাকুক। কিন্তু সেটা নিয়েও আলোচনার অবকাশ আছে। যে আলোচনা এখনও শুরু হয়নি।" ইঙ্গিতপূর্ণ ভাবে সারন আরও বলেন, "অনেকে বলছে, চিন এবং আফগানিস্তানের বিষয়টি একে অপরের সঙ্গে জড়িত। ভারত তা মনে করে না।"

এর সঙ্গেই সারন যোগ করেছেন, "এর আগে কিন্তু আমেরিকা এবং জাপানও সার্কের পর্যবেক্ষক দেশ হতে চেয়ে আবেদন করেছে।"

১ জানুয়ারি ২০০৬-এর মধ্যে সাত দেশের মুক্ত বাণিজ্য অঞ্চল বা 'সাফটা' চালু হওয়া নিয়েও আশাবাদী ভারত। তবে তিনটি বিষয় নিয়ে এখনও আলোচনা চলছে। প্রথমত, যে সব দ্রব্য অবাধ বাণিজ্যের আওতায় থাকবে না পরিভাষায় যাকে বলে 'নেগেটিভ লিস্ট', দ্বিতীয়ত, 'লোকাল অরিজিন' এবং তৃতীয়ত, শুল্ক ক্ষতিপূরণ বা 'রেভিনিউ কম্পেনসেশন'।

তুলনায় অনুন্নত দেশগুলি এ নিয়ে আপত্তি জানাচ্ছে। সারন বলেন, "ওরা ক্ষতিপূরণের কথা বলছে। কিন্তু কত দিন সেই ক্ষতিপূরণ দেওয়া হবে, তা নিয়ে আলোচনা চলছে। আমাদের আশা, কালই বিষয়গুলির সুরাহা হয়ে যাবে।"

UN, US mount pressure on Pak

HT-1
Pak
2/12

S. Rajagopalan & HTC

Washington/Islamabad/New Delhi, November 2

PAKISTAN MAY have ruled out the possibility of terrorists based in its territory having a hand in the Delhi blasts, but not everybody is convinced. The UN and the US have sought to mount indirect pressure on Pakistan to crack down on the sponsors, financiers and perpetrators of the bomb blasts.

UN Security Council president Mihai-Razvan Ungureanu, without explicitly naming Pakistan but leaving none in doubt about his target, has emphasised that all states must "co-operate actively with Indian authorities".

"The Security Council stresses the importance of bringing the perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of violence to justice, and urges all states, in accordance with their obligations under international law and resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005), to cooperate actively with the Indian authorities in this regard," he said in a statement to the UNSC meeting on Monday.

The US also made an oblique but unmistakable call on Pakistan. "Everybody has a responsibility to do their part to crack down on terrorism," White House spokesman Scott McClellan said during a press briefing on Tuesday. "And we can all do more in that regard."

The comments by the UNSC president and the White House spokesman come close on the heels of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's dismay over indications of "external linkages" in the terror strikes in the capital on October 29.

On Wednesday, Islamabad asked India to share evidence in this regard and promised to take action against those involved. "The Prime Minister talked about preliminary investigations pointing to the possibility of (involvement of Pakistan-based militants groups in the Delhi blasts)," Pakistani foreign office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam told reporters in Islamabad. "That is certainly not some evidence. We do expect the government of India to share the evidence of any Pakistani connection. Once we get that evidence we certainly will take action."

Also on Wednesday, Pakistani interior minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao said: "We're ready to extend all out cooperation to the Indian government."

Act against terrorism, ^{gover' fan} Manmohan tells Musharraf ^{HD-1} ^{1/11}

Indications of external linkages of terrorist groups behind blasts

Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI: A telephone call on Monday evening from Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh became an opportunity for Dr. Singh to tell Gen. Musharraf without mincing words that India expected Pakistan to act against terrorism directed at India and that there were "indications" of "external linkages" of terrorist groups behind the October 29 bombings in the capital.

The Ministry of External Affairs released a brief statement giving the gist of the Musharraf-

Singh conversation.

Apparently, around 7.15 p.m. Dr. Singh received a telephone call from Gen. Musharraf who offered his condolences for those killed in the Delhi bombings. He also expressed his grief over the train accident in Andhra Pradesh the same day in which more than a hundred passengers lost their lives.

The Prime Minister reportedly told Gen. Musharraf that the country was "outraged" at the heinous acts of terrorism and the violence against defenceless civilians.

He told him that terrorism

could never be justified and that such acts could not and would not weaken India's resolve to fight it or its commitment to the country's unity and territorial integrity.

Dr. Singh's curt reminder to Gen. Musharraf that his country had made a commitment to ending cross-border terrorism and his reference to "indications" of "external linkages of terrorist groups" with the Delhi blasts were seen by political observers as a diplomatic signal to Pakistan that India could not expect to demonstrate endless patience and tolerance in the face of con-

tinued provocation.

What has been more galling to Indians — and this view was being openly expressed in offices of political parties — was that the terrorist strikes took place just ahead of the major festival of Diwali and soon after India had offered generous help to Pakistan with the relief and rehabilitation of those affected by the earthquake that devastated large areas of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir although at least three districts of Jammu and Kashmir on this side of the Line of Control had also been severely affected by the earthquake.

Pakistan national sentenced to death in Red Fort attack case

Seven years for his wife, life term for two other accused

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: Mohammed Arif alias Asfaq, a Pakistan national and member of the Lashkar-e-Tajiba, was sentenced to death by a lower court here on Monday in the Red Fort attack case. Co-accused Nazir Ahmed Quasid and his son, Farooq Ahmed Quasid, both of Indian origin, were awarded rigorous life imprisonment. Three Army personnel were killed in the December 22, 2000 attack.

In the jam-packed courtroom, additional sessions judge O.P. Saini said: "I sentence Mohammed Arif alias Asfaq alias Abdul Hamad to death along with a fine of Rs.1 lakh, subject to its confirmation by the Delhi High Court, under Section 121 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for waging war against the Government of India. He shall be

hanged by neck till he is dead."

Arif was also sentenced to death under Section 302, "subject to its confirmation by the Delhi High Court, for committing the murder of Army personnel Ashok Kumar, Uma Shankar and Abdullah Thakur inside the Red Fort.

Arif, main accused, was sentenced also for various other offences. He would have to pay Rs. 5.35 lakhs as fine.

Arif's wife, Rehmana Yusuf Farooqui, who is of Indian origin, was sentenced to seven-year rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 10,000 for sheltering him before and after the incident.

She was also sentenced to seven-year rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 10,000 for not disclosing the designs of Arif.

Nazir Ahmed Quasid and his son were sentenced to life im-



Mohammad Arif alias Asfaq who has been sentenced to death in the Red Fort attack case.

prisonment with fines of Rs. 50,000 each for waging war against the Government (121 of IPC), 10-year rigorous imprison-

ment with fines of Rs. 25,000 each for conspiring to wage war against the Government (121-A of IPC) and life imprisonment with fines of Rs. 25,000 each "for conspiring to murder all those who came in their way in waging war and due to which Uma Shankar, Abdullah Thakur and Ashok Kumar were killed."

The other accused, Matloob, Babar Mohsin and Sadaquat Ali, who were held guilty for various offences, were sentenced to seven-year rigorous imprisonment.

The court sentenced Matloob to seven-year rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs. 10,000 for forging a ration card for Arif to give him an Indian identity. Babar Mohsin was also sentenced to seven-year rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs. 10,000 for sheltering Arif before and after the incident.

'Show proof' reply to 'curb terror'

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 31. — Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh tonight told Pakistan President Gen. Pervez Musharraf that there were "external links" to Saturday's blasts, suspected to have been triggered by the Pakistan-based militant outfit, Lashker-e-Taiyaba, and asked him to take action against acts of "terrorism directed against India".

Pakistan tonight said India should provide it evidence of a Pakistan-based militant group's involvement in the serial blasts. Pakistan foreign office spokesperson Ms Tasneem Aslam said President Gen. Pervez Musharraf, in his talks with Dr Singh, had offered to cooperate with the probe in the Delhi blasts that left 59 dead.

Dr Singh had a 10-minute telephone conversation with President

Red Fort: Death for one

NEW DELHI, Oct. 31. — A Delhi court today handed down the death penalty and a fine of Rs 4.35 lakh to LeT commander Md Arif alias Ashfaq convicted of attacking the Red Fort in December 2000. — SNS

Details on page 3

Musharraf this evening who called the Prime Minister shortly after telling reporters in Rawalpindi that Pakistan was ready to extend "unequivocal support" to India in the probe into Saturday's "dastardly terrorist" attack. The General had called to offer his condolences to the victims of the bomb blasts and the railway accident in Andhra Pradesh.

Yesterday, an obscure Kashmiri militant group, Islamic Inquilab Mahaz, had taken credit for the Delhi blasts which claimed 59 lives. India believes this group is a front for a larg-

^{Indo-Pak}er terrorist group, probably, the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiyaba.

Dr Singh was perhaps alluding to this connection, when he told the General that India "continues to be disturbed and dismayed at indications of external terrorist links to the 29 October serial blasts". He asserted that India expects Pakistan to act against terrorism directed at India. Dr Singh again drew Gen. Musharraf's attention to Pakistan's commitment to ending cross-border terrorism.

Dr Singh also told the Pakistan President that India was "outraged" by the acts of terrorism. He pointed out that "violence against defenceless civilians can never be justified and terrorism would never weaken India's resolve, or our commitment to the country's unity and territorial integrity".

More reports on page 4

THE STATESMAN

0 1 NOV 2005

India, Pakistan agree to open 5 points on LoC

TNN AND AGENCIES 11-12

Islamabad: India and Pakistan have agreed to open five points along the Line of Control (LoC) from November 7 to enable people cross over to the other side for relief and reconstruction material. The two sides, however, failed to reach an understanding on permitting affected people in PoK to avail of benefits in Indian relief camps.

Billed as a historic breakthrough, a joint statement issued at the end of talks in the wee hours of Sunday was the second major initiative by both the countries to soften the LoC after this year's agreement to run bus services between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad without passports and visas.

The points to be opened along the LoC are Nauseri-Tithwal, Chakoti-Uri, Hajipir-Uri, Rawalakot-Poonch and Tattapani-Mendhar. The crossings will be permitted from November 7 and the applications cleared within 10 days. "It was agreed that because of the non-availability of or damage to infrastructure on these points, crossings across the LoC will be permitted on foot," the joint statement said. "This will help efforts being made by both the countries to open up a trade routes connecting both sides," said an Indian official who attended the talks headed by Dilip Sinha, joint secretary in the Indian foreign ministry, and Syed Ibne Abbas, director general in Pakistan's foreign office.

The two sides, however, failed to reach an agreement on the Indian proposal to permit quake-affected people living close to the LoC to avail of the facilities at relief camps as all major routes from Pakistan and Muzaffarabad have been blocked by landslides. The statement said, "For relief purposes, it was agreed that with prior information and acceptance and depending on the feasibility, relief items can be sent in either direction and handed over to the local authorities at the aforementioned crossing points." The statement said the same parameters being followed for the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service would be applied for permitting people to cross the divide.

THE HINDU OF INDIA

01 NOV 2005

PM seeks more Russian N-reactors

Press Trust of India

MOSCOW, Dec. 5. — Following the success of the Kudankulam project in Tamil Nadu, Dr Manmohan Singh today conveyed New Delhi's willingness to consider acquiring additional Russian nuclear reactors in view of India's growing energy demands.

This was stated by foreign ministry spokesman Mr Navtej Sarna after a meeting between the Prime Minister and Russian energy and industry minister Mr Viktor Khristenko. The statement came on the eve of Dr Singh's summit-level talks with

President Mr Vladimir Putin.

Both sides also agreed to promote commercial cooperation among each other's oil companies through various measures, including the floating of joint ventures and equity participation. Dr Singh said India and Russia must develop long-term energy ties and expressed India's keenness to join Russia in exploring and producing of oil and gas in third countries, specially in Central Asia.

Earlier, Dr Singh asserted that working together in the space sector would be a "win-win proposition" for both countries. Delivering a speech after being awarded the title

of Professor Honoris Causa at Moscow University, Dr Singh also said Russia and India must fight terrorism wherever it surfaced because "terrorism anywhere threatens democracy everywhere". He also spoke of opportunities for cooperation in biotechnology, IT and nano-technology and for a strategic partnership in knowledge-based enterprises.

Dr Singh told a Russian daily that India and Russia planned to move from a "buyer-seller" relationship to one aimed at planning and producing high-tech arms jointly, adds AFP.

CII team in Russia, page 9

PM to take up nuclear reactor issue with Putin

PRANAB DHAL SAMANTA
MOSCOW, DECEMBER 5

AS India and US prepare for another meeting later this month of the joint working group on implementing the July 18 joint statement, New Delhi is eyeing Russia to deliver on four additional nuclear reactors for Koodankulam during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's stay here.

The PM, who arrived here this evening, will raise this along with the fuel for Tarapur during his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday. The PM made it clear that fuel for Tarapur is a "separate issue" and must not be linked with fulfilling commitments made in July 18 joint statement.

In fact, the joint statement is clear that the US will assist "in the meantime" for obtaining fuel for Tarapur. This, sources said, provides Russia with a chance to take the lead and expand the scope for civilian nuclear cooperation that's restricted by guidelines of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

In what is an indicator of the pace at which Indo-US talks are moving, official sources said, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran may carry with him an outline of the Indian plan to separate its civilian and military nuclear reactors when he will go to the US later this month for the next round of meeting with US Under Secretary for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns.

While Washington is still

not in favour of India moving on obtaining fuel for Tarapur pointing out that this may complicate matters, sources said, New Delhi is going by the joint statement which clearly does not make any link with Indian commitments in the deal. It may be recalled that Burns had said in Delhi there were no conditions outside what had been made in the joint statement in the US. In this context, India hopes that Russia will give a positive response this time on reactors for Koodankulam, which have been on the agenda for sometime.

It may be noted that US President George W Bush and French President Jacques Chirac will be visiting India in February.

DEC 5 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

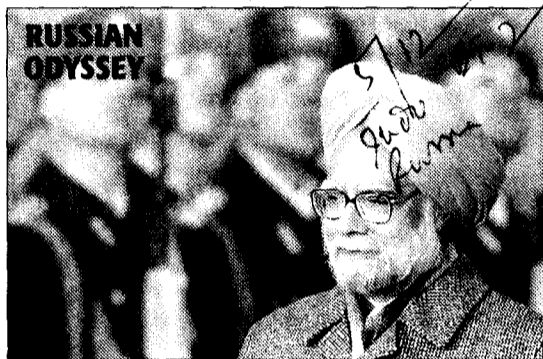
Energy security tops PM's Russia agenda

Amitabh Roychowdhury
MOSCOW 4 DECEMBER

PRIME Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday tried to give a qualitatively new dimension to India's strategic partnership with Russia.

He said there was great scope for expansion of nuclear cooperation and energy security would be high on his agenda when he met President Vladimir Putin.

Dr Singh arrived in Moscow to a red carpet welcome for a three-day visit heading high-level delegation for his annual summit with President Putin. He told reporters accompanying him that India and Russia would discuss regional and multi-regional coopera-



tion to tackle the issue of energy security and resolve the problem of energy scarcity. Dr Singh is keen on Russia's initiative in civilian nuclear cooperation as the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is working on easing the curbs on supply of nuclear fuel to India.

The importance India attaches to nuclear cooperation with Russia is manifest in the presence of atomic energy department secretary Anil Kakodkar in the delegation. It also includes national security advisor MK Narayanan, foreign secretary Shyam Saran and

other senior officials. ^{new}
"Energy security is very high on my agenda. We have already invested in Sakhalin-I (gas and oil project in Russia) and we are looking at how to enlarge cooperation in the field of energy," the PM said. He said the Kundankulam nuclear project in Tamil Nadu was being built with Russian help and there was great scope for expansion of nuclear cooperation with Moscow.

Dr Singh is scheduled to hold one-to-one and delegation-level talks with Mr Putin at the Kremlin on Tuesday covering a range of key international issues and to review progress in multifaceted bilateral relations.

The two sides will sign four agreements, including

the one on military intellectual property rights aimed at joint production of weapon systems and another to amend the Indo-Russian ten-year military-technical programme to enhance and expand the strategic partnership.

Space agencies of both countries will also sign a technology safeguard agreement to operationalise the 2004 pact on joint use of space-based global navigational satellite system. This would provide for joint development of new generation navigational satellites and their launch from India aided by Indian vehicles.

On the supply of nuclear fuel to Tarapur from US, the PM said: "Everything is moving on schedule." — PTI

‘বন্ধু’ রাশিয়াকে পাশে নিয়েই ইরান-প্রশ্নে সমাধান খুঁজছে ভারত

মস্কো, ৪ ডিসেম্বর: আমেরিকার সঙ্গে বন্ধুত্ব গড়ে উঠলেও রাশিয়াই ভারতের সব চেয়ে বড় বন্ধু। এই বার্তা নিয়ে মস্কো পৌঁছলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। সেখানে ভারত-রাশিয়া বৃষ্ঠ শীর্ষ সম্মেলনে যোগ দেবেন তিনি। ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রী হিসাবে জওহরলাল নেহরুর প্রথম রাশিয়া সফরের ঠিক পঞ্চাশ বছর পূর্তিতে মনমোহন সিংহের এই সফর যথেষ্ট তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ। সে কথা স্মরণ করিয়ে দিয়ে স্থিতিশীল বহু-মেরু বিশ্ব গঠনে ভারত-রাশিয়া সম্পর্ক অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বলে ব্যাখ্যা করেন মনমোহন। মস্কো রওনা হওয়ার আগে দিল্লিতে তিনি বলেন, “দু’দেশের মধ্যে বন্ধুত্বপূর্ণ সম্পর্ককে আরও দৃঢ় করাই আমাদের রাশিয়া সফরের উদ্দেশ্য।”

বিমানে সাংবাদিকদের প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেন, রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ বিষয়টি ওঠার আগেই ইরান-বিতর্কের সমাধান চায় ভারত। পরমাণু শক্তি সংস্থাতেই যাতে ইরান-বিতর্ক নিয়ে আলোচনা সীমাবদ্ধ থাকে, তা নিয়ে ইতিমধ্যেই ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের বিভিন্ন দেশ এবং রাশিয়া ও চিনের সঙ্গে কথা বলতে শুরু করেছে ভারত। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আশা, রাশিয়া সফরে এ নিয়ে কথা আরও এগোবে। প্রসঙ্গত, রুশ প্রস্তাব মেনেই পরমাণু শক্তি সংস্থায় ইরান প্রসঙ্গে সমাধান-সূত্র বের করার চেষ্টা চলছে।

মস্কো বিমানবন্দরে মনমোহনকে স্বাগত জানান রাশিয়ার উপ-বিদেশমন্ত্রী আলেকজান্দার চিবাভ ও রাশিয়ায় ভারতীয় রাষ্ট্রদূত কানওয়াল শিবল। সরকারি ভাবে অবশ্য মনমোহনের সফর শুরু হচ্ছে আগামী কাল। মঙ্গলবার রাশিয়ার প্রেসিডেন্ট দ্বাদিমির পুতিনের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করবেন তিনি। চলতি বছরে এর আগে তিন বার এই দুই শীর্ষ নেতার সাক্ষাৎ হয়েছে। তার আগে কাল রাশিয়ার শক্তিমন্ত্রী ও প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রীর সঙ্গেও মনমোহন সিংহের বৈঠক হওয়ার কথা।



রাশিয়ায় গার্ড অফ অনার মনমোহনকে। - এএফপি

প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেন, “দু’দেশের মধ্যে ইতিমধ্যেই দীর্ঘস্থায়ী প্রতিরক্ষা সংক্রান্ত অংশীদারি গড়ে উঠেছে। আমরা আশা করব, ভবিষ্যতে দু’দেশের মধ্যে শক্তি ক্ষেত্রেও একই রকম সম্পর্ক গড়ে উঠবে।” বিদেশনীতির ক্ষেত্রেও দু’দেশ পরস্পরকে সর্বোচ্চ গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছে।

এই সফরে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে রয়েছেন জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা এম কে নারায়ণন, কেন্দ্রীয় মুখ্যসচিব টি কে এ নায়ার, বিদেশ সচিব শ্যাম সারন এবং পরমাণু শক্তি কমিশনের চেয়ারম্যান অনিল কাকোদকর। দু’দেশের মধ্যে মোট চারটি চুক্তি হওয়ার কথা। এর মধ্যে সামরিক-প্রযুক্তি সংক্রান্ত দু’টি চুক্তি রয়েছে। মাসখানেক আগে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের মস্কো সফরের সময়েই দু’দেশের মধ্যে এ নিয়ে বিস্তারিত আলোচনা হয়েছিল। এ ছাড়া মহাকাশ গবেষণায় যৌথ ভাবে কৃত্রিম উপগ্রহ ব্যবহার নিয়েও একটি চুক্তি স্বাক্ষর হওয়ার কথা রয়েছে। একই সঙ্গে ভারতের ইসরো ও রাশিয়ার রসকসমস-এর মধ্যে গবেষণা সংক্রান্ত আদানপ্রদান নিয়েও একটি চুক্তি হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে।

শক্তি সংক্রান্ত ক্ষেত্রে ইতিমধ্যেই রাশিয়ার সাইবেরিয়া অঞ্চলে সাখালিন-১ তেল ও গ্যাস প্রকল্পে ভারত বিনিয়োগ করেছে। এখন সাখালিন-৩ প্রকল্পেও বিনিয়োগের কথা ভাবনাচিন্তা করছে ভারত। আবার রাশিয়াও ইরান-পাকিস্তান-ভারত তেল পাইপলাইনে বিনিয়োগের বিষয়ে উৎসাহী। দু’দেশের মধ্যে বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্রে যৌথ সমঝোতার পাশাপাশি ব্যাগিঞ্জ বাড়ানোর ক্ষেত্রেও গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হচ্ছে। ভারত দু’দেশের মধ্যে যোগাযোগ বাড়াতে ভিসা আইন সরলীকরণের দাবি জানিয়েছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সফরে এই প্রসঙ্গে বিভিন্ন সম্ভাবনা খতিয়ে দেখা হতে পারে। যৌথ সমঝোতা ছাড়া ভারত-পাক শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া নিয়েও কথা হতে পারে।

Defence, energy to dominate India-Russia meet

Agreements on intellectual property rights, technology safeguards to be signed. *7-8 Dec 2005*

Vladimir Radyuhin

THE INDIA-RUSSIA summit in Moscow next week will give a new quality to strategic partnership between the two countries, shifting the focus to cooperation in cutting-edge defence technologies and energy security.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who arrives in Moscow on Sunday for a three-day official visit, will preside over the inking of a package of defence-related accords, which will pave the way for large-scale transfers of military technologies.

India and Russia will sign a key agreement on intellectual property rights (IPR), which will open the way to joint designing and manufacture of futuristic weapon systems such as the BrahMos supersonic anti-ship missile.

Russia has long cited the absence of an IPR pact as a barrier to sharing weapon technologies with India. The IPR accord "will give a higher quality to our cooperation in the defence sphere," Mr. Singh said in an interview to the Russian government daily *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* ahead of his visit to Rus-

sia. The two sides will also sign an accord on technology safeguards related to the Russian-designed Glonass space communication system. This secrecy protection agreement is needed to implement last year's accord on cooperation in operationalising the Glonass space navigation system, Russia's equivalent of the American global positioning system, by 2007. India and Russia will jointly design a new communication satellite Glonass-K, and Indian booster rockets will also orbit the Russian-built Glonass-M satellites. India will have access to both civilian and military applications of Glonass, enabling the Indian military to target its missiles with pinpoint precision. According to Indian Ambassador to Russia Kanwal Sibal, the Glonass project lends a new quality to Indo-Russian cooperation, setting a model for other high-tech projects in the defence field.

A third defence accord to be signed in Moscow next week will be an amendment to the India-Russia 10-year military-technical cooperation programme till 2010, under which India will acquire \$20 billion worth of arms and military equipment from Russia.

The defence agenda for Mr. Singh's talks in Moscow will cover the joint construction of a multi-role transport aircraft (MTA), joint development of a fifth generation fighter plane, purchase of more frigates for the Indian Navy from Russia, and product support, which remains "very important," according to Ambassador Sibal.

On the civilian front, energy security will dominate the bilateral agenda in the years to come. The Prime Minister Singh described energy as "a solid basis for expanding our strategic partnership in the years to come."

Both sides said there was full agreement at the top political level that India should have broader access to Russian energy resources. But with international demand for Russian oil and gas growing fast, India faces stiff competition from Japan and China. "The challenge for us is how India's energy needs can be built into the Russian energy strategy," Ambassador Sibal said.

Much will depend on the activism of Indian energy companies in their talks with Russian oil and gas firms. Just as the heads of ONGC and OVL were in Russia earlier this week for talks with Rosneft state-owned oil

company, a Chinese official was quoted as saying in Beijing that China would be "definitely" interested in acquiring Rosneft assets.

Nuclear scene

Nuclear energy looks set to play an increasingly bigger role in India-Russia economic cooperation now that international restrictions on technology transfer to India are bound to be lifted shortly. Russia is the only country currently involved in India's nuclear energy programme, setting up two nuclear reactors at Koodankulam, and it could be the immediate beneficiary of the likely lifting of international nuclear technology restrictions for India.

According to Prime Minister Singh, "broader cooperation in atomic power projects, investment in infrastructure and project technology exports can promote a fast growth of Russian exports to India."

The Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, R. Chidambaram, who accompanies the Prime Minister to Moscow, is likely to discuss the Russian offer to build four more nuclear reactors at Koodankulam.

Russia planning war games with India, China

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Military exercises under Shanghai Cooperation Organisation framework

Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW: Russia plans to hold war games with India and China, a top defence official here said.

"Our goal is to organise such multi-country military exercises [with both India and China] within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation," Chief of the Russian General Staff Yuri Baluyevsky told *The Hindu* ahead of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit.

Observer status

China, along with Russia, is a founding member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) that also includes Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. India joined it as an observer last July, along with Pakistan and Iran.

"The joint war games our paratroopers held with the Indian military this year showed the importance and practical weight of the eastern vector of Russia's foreign policy," the four-star General said. "Our relations with the neighbours in the west and east are based on mutual interests. We have mutual interests with India and China, including in the sharing of defence skills and experience."

Russia held large-scale manoeuvres with China earlier this year, prompting western analysts to conclude that the SCO was turning into a military bloc. The General denied such speculation.

• "SCO not acquiring functions of a military bloc"

• Exercises aimed at preventing, combating terrorism

"I would like to dispel any fears that the SCO is acquiring any functions of a military organisation," General Baluyevsky said. "The exercises we are planning will be directed at preventing, combating acts of terrorism and eliminating their consequences."

Shared interests

India's cooperation with Russia and China is likely to come up during Dr. Singh's talks with President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday. On the eve of his visit to Russia, Dr. Singh said such cooperation was based on shared interests.

"India, Russia and China share a common approach to the challenges of the 21st century and a desire to use [the] trilateral format to combat new threats, such as terrorism, drug trafficking and international crime," the Prime Minister said in an interview to the Russian Government newspaper, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*. "There is also a very significant potential for trilateral economic cooperation in such spheres as trade, finances, investment, agriculture, energy and high technologies."

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মার্কিন-ঘেঁষা তকমা ঝেড়ে রাশিয়ার সঙ্গে সামরিক সম্পর্ক বাড়চ্ছে ভারত

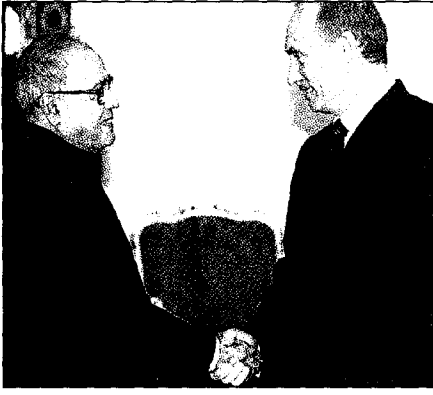
অগ্নি রায় • মস্কো

১৬ নভেম্বর: ক্রেমলিনের প্রাসাদে রাশিয়ার প্রেসিডেন্ট পুতিনের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করে ভারতের 'মার্কিন ঘেঁষা' বিদেশনীতির তকমা অনেকটাই ঝেড়ে ফেলতে চাইলেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়। বৈঠকের পরে এই বিষয়ে তাঁর বক্তব্য, "কিছু সংশয় তৈরি হয়েছিল। রাশিয়া অবশ্য সেটা প্রকাশ করেনি। কিন্তু আমরা আমাদের অবস্থানকে আবার তুলে ধরলাম।" অন্য দিকে, পুতিনের বক্তব্য, "প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী এক জন অভিজ্ঞ ব্যক্তি। তাঁকে আমরা ভাল করেই চিনি।"

ডিসেম্বরে আসছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। তার আগে বহুকেন্দ্রিক কূটনীতির ভিত প্রস্তুত করা হল এই সফরে। এক দিকে দিল্লি-মস্কো সম্পর্ক ঝালিয়ে নিয়ে কূটনৈতিক বিশ্বে সঙ্কেত পাঠানো, অন্য দিকে, ঘরোয়া রাজনীতিতে নাছোড় বামেদের উদ্দেশ্যে বার্তা দেওয়া। পুতিনের সঙ্গে আধ ঘণ্টার বৈঠকের পরে প্রণববাবু জানিয়েছেন, "ভুল বোঝাবুঝি হওয়ার কোনও সম্ভাবনা নেই। আমাদের সঙ্গে আমেরিকার কোনও বড় সামরিক আদান-প্রদান কখনও ছিল না। এখন কিছু ক্ষেত্রে হয়েছে। কিন্তু তাতে বহু সংশয় দেখা যাচ্ছে।"

জুন মাসের মার্কিন সফর সেরে আসার পরে দেশে বামদলগুলির বিরূপ সমালোচনার মুখে পড়তে হয়েছিল প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী এবং মনমোহন সরকারকে। পরে ইরান নিয়েও সমর্থন তুলে নেওয়ার ছমকি দেওয়া হয় কিছু বাম নেতার পক্ষ থেকে। রাশিয়া সফরের দ্বিতীয় দিনে মুখ খুলেছেন প্রণব। ইউপিএ সরকার দেশকে বিক্রি করে দিতে চাইছে বলে সিপিএম তথা বামদলগুলির যে অভিযোগ, তা উড়িয়ে দিয়ে তিনি বলেছেন, "আমার মনে হয় ওরা সঙ্কেত টিক ভাবে বুঝবে। ভারতবর্ষ কাউকে বিক্রি করার বিষয় নয়। ভারতবর্ষ হল ভারতবর্ষই।"

তবে শুধু কূটনৈতিক ভাবে দিল্লির অবস্থানকে সুদৃঢ় করাই নয়, চলতি সফরে দুটি দীর্ঘ মেয়াদি সমস্যার সমাধানও করেছেন প্রণববাবু। রাশিয়ার সামরিক প্রযুক্তির



রুশ প্রেসিডেন্টের সঙ্গে প্রণব। — এ এফ পি

বিনিময়ে তাদের মেধাসম্ব দেওয়া নিয়ে বিতর্ক দীর্ঘ দিনের। রাশিয়ার দাবি ছিল, এই সম্ব দিতে হবে পূর্বাধিকার প্রেক্ষিতে। কিন্তু মস্কোকে এ কথা বোঝানো গিয়েছে যে, আগের হিসাব থেকে নয়, ডিসেম্বরে মনমোহন পুতিনের যৌথ ঘোষণাপত্র (যার খসড়া তৈরি হল এই সফরে) স্বাক্ষরিত হওয়ার পরেই মেধাসম্ব চালু করবে ভারত।

দ্বিতীয়ত, সোভিয়েত আমলে কেনা বহু সামরিক সরঞ্জাম যন্ত্রাংশের অভাবে ভারতে অকেজো হয়ে পড়ে রয়েছে। রুশ প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী ইভানভের সঙ্গে বৈঠকে সিদ্ধান্ত হয়েছে, এ বার প্রয়োজনীয় যন্ত্রাংশ রাশিয়া থেকে আমদানি করতে পারবে ভারত। প্রণববাবু জানিয়েছেন, "মেধাসম্বের বিষয়টির নিষ্পত্তি না হওয়া পর্যন্ত

ওরা এই যন্ত্রাংশ দেওয়া নিয়ে এগোতে চাইছিল না।" আগামী এক বছরে ভারত রাশিয়া থেকে এক কোটি ডলার মূল্যের সামরিক সরঞ্জাম আমদানি করবে বলে প্রণববাবু জানিয়েছেন।

অন্যান্য দ্বিপাক্ষিক বিষয় নিয়েও প্রণবের সঙ্গে বৈঠক হয়েছে ইভানভ-পুতিনের। আইএইএ-তে ইরান প্রসঙ্গে ভোটগণনার কথাও উঠেছে। প্রণববাবু রাশিয়ার শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বকে জানিয়েছেন, "আমরা বিষয়টি রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের নিরাপত্তা পরিষদে পাঠাতে চাই না। চিনও সেটা চায় না। এ নিয়ে আমাদের মধ্যে কোনও দ্বিমত নেই।"

পুতিনের সঙ্গে আজকের বৈঠকে অনিবার্য ভাবেই এসেছে সীমান্তপার সন্ত্রাসের প্রসঙ্গ। তার আগে ইভানভের সঙ্গে যৌথ সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে সন্ত্রাস নিয়ে সরব হয়েছেন প্রণববাবু। বলেছেন, "আমরা এই বৈঠকের সুযোগকে কাজে লাগিয়ে

সন্ত্রাসবাদের বাড়বাড়ন্ত রোধের কৌশল নিয়ে কথা বলেছি। ইউরেশিয়া তথা গোটা বিশ্বেই সন্ত্রাসবাদ ছড়াচ্ছে। আন্তর্জাতিক মহল ঐক্যবদ্ধ ভাবে একে রুখবে।" সরকারি সূত্রের খবর, ভারতে সাম্প্রতিক জঙ্গি হানার ঘটনাগুলি নিয়ে প্রণববাবুর সঙ্গে বৈঠকে গভীর উদ্বেগ প্রকাশ করেছেন পুতিন। এ ব্যাপারে সরকারি ভাবে বলা হয়েছে, "আন্তর্জাতিক নিরাপত্তা পরিস্থিতির কথা মাথায় রেখেই দু'দেশের সামরিক প্রযুক্তির সমন্বয় আরও শক্তিশালী করার সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছে।"

Pranab sends message to Left via Moscow

SUJAN DUTTA

Moscow, Nov. 16: From 10 Janpath to Alimuddin Street via the Kremlin, Pranab Mukherjee today carried a message for the Left in India and also told a gung-ho Washington that in India's military relations the US must be left out somewhere.

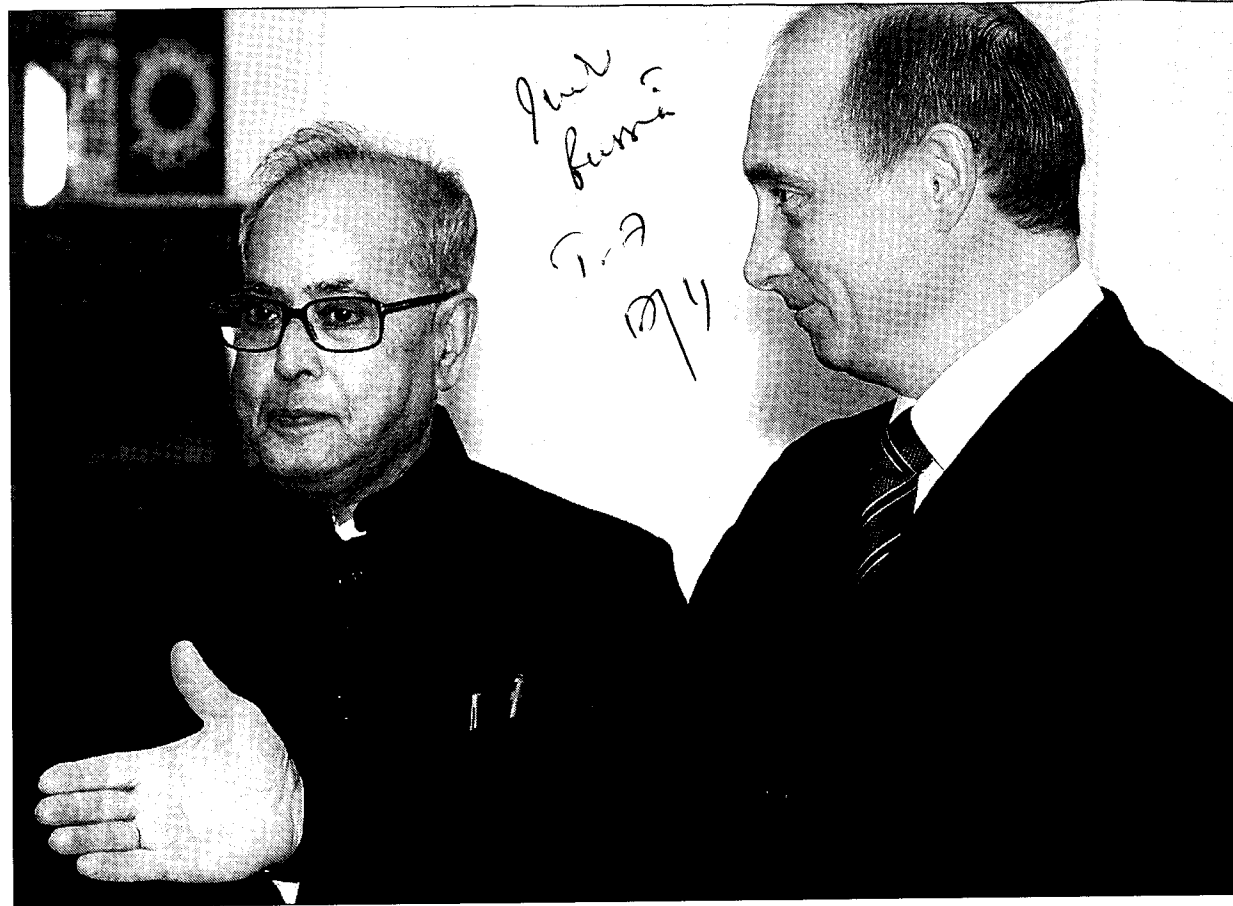
The defence minister had two separate meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The first was a 30-minute private affair that Mukherjee said was to give a message from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The second meeting, also in the Kremlin, was in the company of Indian officials.

At the top of Mukherjee's agenda for the meeting with the Russian President was the promise that New Delhi's dalliance with American military suppliers will not dilute Russia's stake in the defence establishment. And just second on the agenda was the effort to assuage the Left.

"I hope they will get the message," he replied after being asked to respond to the Left's allegation that he was bartering Indian security interests to the US after signing the framework agreement in Washington in June this year. "I hope they will get the message that India is India and India is not for sale to anybody," Mukherjee repeated.

Mukherjee also said India and Russia were in touch on the Iran issue. It was clear that Moscow had raised India's vote against Iran and in favour of referring it to the UN Security Council.

The Russian side was concerned that India was altering its traditional position. But Mukherjee said New Delhi and Moscow as well as China were in touch and it could well be that when the Iran issue comes up at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on November 24, India would work to avoid a reference to the Security Council on Iran's nuclear facilities.



Pranab Mukherjee with Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Wednesday. (Reuters)

The Russian President had kind words for Mukherjee after the meetings, words to convey that Moscow was taking New Delhi's reassurance at face value. The Indian defence minister, he said, is "an experienced person who we know well".

Putin also noted that political contacts between Moscow and New Delhi were incomparable. "The level of our political contacts is of an unprecedented nature. They are based on ancient friendly relations and meet the interests of our peoples. It is important that relations between the two defence ministries of the two countries are developing dynamically," he said.

To illustrate this dynamism Putin emphasised the military exchanges. "Our mil-

itary ships have visited India this year and we are planning to conduct such exercises in future," he said.

Mukherjee repeatedly emphasised that the procurement and acquisitions from Russia were not threatened by engagement with the US. "The dominant position of Russia in our defence technology cooperation is clear. There is no question of diluting that position. There has been no misunderstanding with Russia but the fact of the matter is we never had any military relationship with the US and now that possibility is developing," he explained.

Mukherjee's one-to-one meeting with Putin lasted 30 minutes. Mukherjee and Russian defence minister Ivanov earlier concluded the fifth

meeting of the Inter Governmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation. Mukherjee marked out the consent to the text of an intellectual property rights (IPR) agreement and Russia's agreement to allow Indian armed forces and agencies direct interaction with original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) for spares as the two highlights of the meeting.

On the IPR agreement that will be formally signed during Prime minister Manmohan Singh's visit in the first week of December, Mukherjee said Moscow had agreed not to implement it retrospectively but from the date that it is signed. Also, it had agreed to a proposal on the definition of the phrase "military product" that was forwarded by Indian

ambassador Kanwal Sibal.

The inter governmental commission also agreed that the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy will be allowed to interact with original equipment manufacturers for spares — a burning issue because of ageing Soviet-era equipment.

Right now, Moscow allows direct interaction with only 16 of more than 200 OEMs from whom equipment had been procured by India.

Mukherjee said an agreement on Indian participation to produce medium lift military transport aircraft was also likely during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit. Russia has agreed to procure 100 aircraft of the category and the IAF will procure 45 aircraft.

Minister holds Russia in defence bear hug

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

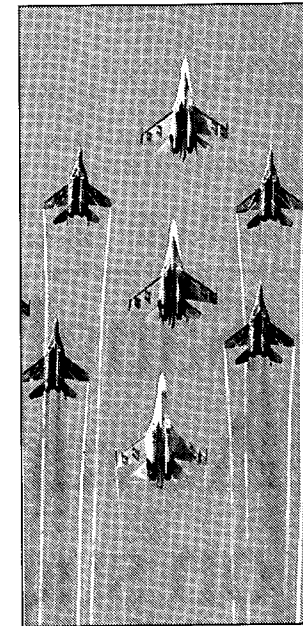
Moscow, Nov. 16: Defence minister Pranab Mukherjee's visit to Russia has been one massive effort from New Delhi to tell Moscow that it is not undoing the Bear Hug. Mukherjee took flak from the Left in June after signing the India-US defence framework agreement in Washington. The Left has alleged that he was bartering away Indian security interests to America.

Mukherjee's sojourn in Moscow this time not only restores the balance somewhat but also brings into sharp focus the deep and wide military ties that India and Russia share. Agreements that have a bearing on the military-technical relationship could well underpin the Prime Minister's visit.

A look at what Mukherjee's Moscow kitty looks like after the conclusion of the military-technical talks this afternoon:

■ **The Intellectual Property Rights Agreement:** Mukherjee and Ivanov have announced that the two sides have agreed to its text. The Russians have been insistent on the agreement to cover all future defence deals. The agreement will be signed during Manmohan Singh's visit

■ **Advanced Technical Vessel (ATV) and naval acquisitions:** Mukherjee said the two sides have identified areas for production of certain equipment for the ATV, a euphemism for India's submarine programme, and the air defence ship. This is probably the first time that collaboration on the ATV has been acknowledged at this level



MiG-29 and Sukhoi Su-27 fighters at an airshow in St. Petersburg. (Reuters file picture)

■ **Fifth generation fighter aircraft:** Mukherjee said the IAF has committed to actively engage itself with concrete offers from Sukhoi and RAC MiG Corporation. He said the Indian government has made it clear that it will participate in the programme and has conveyed its interest in taking a financial stake in it

■ **Medium lift transport aircraft:** The project is being taken up for the IAF to acquire aircraft capable of lifting payloads between its AN 32s and IL 76s in the sub-20-tonne category. India has given a draft proposal for a joint venture company. The project is estimated around Rs 7,000 crore

■ **Brahmos Supersonic Cruise Missile:** Ivanov announced during the meeting of

the IGC on MTC (inter governmental commission on military technical cooperation) that Russia and India will jointly make an effort to market the missile to friendly third countries. The first country identified for such an export project is Chile which Mukherjee visited last month and which this month sent its army and naval chiefs to New Delhi.

The missile is touted to be more effective than the subsonic Tomahawk used by the US forces. The Russian side also announced that it was preparing to induct the Brahmos into its navy. Moscow also committed a fresh infusion of \$ 25.2 million for the enhanced authorised capital of the joint venture project that draws its name from the Brahmaputra and Moskva rivers

■ **GLONASS:** Mukherjee announced that Russia has agreed to India using the Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS) on a request from the Indian department of space. The two countries are to launch 16 more satellites in three years, an agreement that was touched upon during Putin's visit to New Delhi in 2004

■ **Further joint research and development efforts:** Involving the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and several Russian science institutes. Some progress has been recorded in the efforts for the Kaveri engine. The engine is to be used in India's Light Combat Aircraft project. It is being tried in Russia and is now to enter into a flight bed test. In flight bed tests, the engine will be fired from another aircraft that already runs on at least two other engines.

রুশ-ভারত মৈত্রীর পুরনো সুরই ফুটল প্রণবের সফরে

অগ্নি রায় • মস্কো

১৫ নভেম্বর: কপাল থেকে পা
পর্যন্ত ফারের পোশাকে ঢাকা।

“শীতের বিরুদ্ধে যুদ্ধে আমার
অস্ত্রসজ্জা সম্পূর্ণ।” দশ বছর পর মস্কো
এসে এই কৌতুকের আবহে কুটনৈতিক
দৌত্য শুরু করলেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী
প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়।

পরিসংখ্যান বলছে, রুশ-ভারত
সরকারি কমিশন এবং দু’দেশের সেনা-
গোয়েন্দা সমন্বয়ের এটি নিয়মমাফিক
বৈঠক। কিন্তু যে ছবিটা দেখছি, তা
আসলে সাউথ ব্লকের সঙ্গে
ক্রেমলিনের সেই পুরনো কোলাকুলির
স্মৃতিকেই খুঁচিয়ে তুলছে। আজ প্রণব
আর রুশ প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী সেগেই
ইভানভের বৈঠকে যা হল। কাল
প্রেসিডেন্ট পুতিনের সঙ্গে প্রণবের
বৈঠকে যা হবে।

দিল্লি থেকে বিমানে ওঠার আগে
প্রণববাবু বলেছিলেন,
“রাশিয়াকে আমরা
অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ
অংশীদার বলে মনে
করি।” ইভানভের
সঙ্গে বৈঠক সেরে
রুশ সেনাকর্তাদের
বললেন, “বিশ্বের
অন্যান্য দেশের সঙ্গে
সম্প্রতি কৌশলগত
সম্পর্ক ঘনিষ্ঠ হওয়া
সঙ্গেও ভারত
রাশিয়ার সঙ্গে



কালোস্তীর্ণ সুসম্পর্কের প্রতি দায়বদ্ধ।”
অর্থাৎ, আমেরিকার সঙ্গে পরমাণু
সমঝোতা হলেও দিল্লি যে মস্কোকে
উপেক্ষা করবে না, এই কুটনৈতিক
আশ্বাসবাহী যথাস্থানে পৌঁছে দেওয়ার
পাশাপাশি একটা রাজনৈতিক ব্যর্তা
স্বদেশেও গেল। জোটসঙ্গী বামেদের
বলা হল, সরকার মার্কিনপন্থী হয়ে
উঠছে, এই আশঙ্কা অমূলক।

সন্ত্রাসবাদ, আঞ্চলিক পরিস্থিতি
সম্পর্কে ভারতের উদ্বেগের কথা এ
দিন ইভানভকে জানিয়েছেন প্রণববাবু।
অভিযোগ করেছেন, তাদের মাটিতে
ভারত-বিরোধী কাজকর্ম বন্ধে উদ্যোগী
হচ্ছে না পাকিস্তান-বাংলাদেশ। দিল্লি ও
জহনাবাদ-কাণ্ডের উল্লেখ করে তিনি
বলেছেন, রাশিয়া যেমন চেচেন জঙ্গি

হামলার শিকার, ভারতও তেমনই জঙ্গি
হানায় জর্জরিত। মাওবাদীদের কথা
বলতে গিয়ে নেপালের সমালোচনা
করেছেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী। ইভানভকে
বলেছেন, সন্ত্রাসবাদ নিয়ন্ত্রণে এবং
গণতন্ত্র ফেরাতে রাজা ব্যর্থ। ভারত
নেপালকে অস্ত্র সরবরাহ বন্ধ করলেও
পাকিস্তান ও চিন যোলা জলে মাছ
ধরার চেষ্টা করছে।

৫ ডিসেম্বর মস্কো আসবেন
মনমোহন সিংহ। তার আগে দ্বিপাক্ষিক
বিষয়গুলি খতিয়ে দেখবেন প্রণববাবু।
‘দ্বিপাক্ষিক বিষয়গুলি’ অর্থাৎ প্রতিরক্ষা
সমন্বয়, আরও বিনিয়োগের জন্য
রাশিয়াকে রাজি করানো, বিশ্ব বাণিজ্য
সংস্থায় মস্কোর অন্তর্ভুক্তির জন্য সমর্থন
দেওয়া, আন্তর্জাতিক সন্ত্রাসবাদের
বিরুদ্ধে এক সঙ্গে কোমর বাঁধা।

ঠান্ডা যুদ্ধের আমলে ভারতে অস্ত্র
রফতানি করত সোভিয়েত ইউনিয়ন
এবং বদলে নিত চা, চাল। প্রাপ্য অর্থ

তখন ভারতের
মুদ্রাতেই ব্যাঙ্কে জমা
রাখার জন্য অনুরোধ
করেছিল মস্কো।
রিজার্ভ ব্যাঙ্কে জমা
থাকা সেই অর্থই
ভারতের শক্তিক্ষেত্রে
বিনিয়োগের জন্য
রাশিয়াকে অনুরোধ
করছেন প্রণব-
মনমোহন। ইভানভ-
প্রণব বৈঠকে স্থির
হয়েছে, রাশিয়া থেকে

নেওয়া সমর-প্রযুক্তি যাতে অন্য দেশের
নাগালে না যায় তার জন্য মেধাস্বত্ব
দেওয়া হবে রাশিয়াকে। কারণ ব্যাখ্যা
করে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী বলেছেন, “আজও
রাশিয়া কোনও অবস্থাতেই পাকিস্তানকে
অস্ত্র বেচে না।”

দিল্লির অনুমান, অদূর ভবিষ্যতেই
আবার বৃহৎ শক্তি হিসাবে রাশিয়ার
অভ্যুত্থান হবে। বাণিজ্য থেকে
সমরাস্ত্র— সার্বিক ভাবেই আজ
সমঝোতার সুর বেজেছে। রাশিয়ার
সঙ্গে যৌথ উদ্যোগে পঞ্চম প্রজন্মের
যুদ্ধবিমান তৈরি, উড়ান নিরাপত্তার
ক্ষেত্রে রুশ প্রযুক্তির আমদানি,
যন্ত্রাংশের অভাবে পড়ে থাকা সমর
সরঞ্জাম মেরামত, সব ধরনের
আলোচনাতেই শোনা গিয়েছে এই সুর।

Pranab likely to iron out differences with Russia

Pranab
16/11

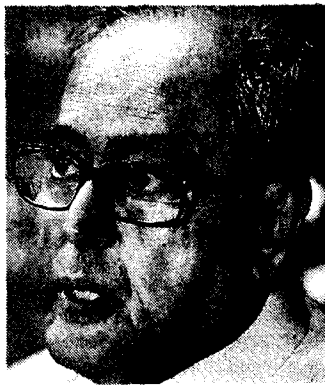
Sandeep Dikshit

11/11/15

NEW DELHI: Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee, who reached Moscow on Tuesday, is expected to hold discussions with his Russian counterpart Sergei Ivanov on ironing out some of the irritants that have crept in defence ties.

High on the agenda would be Russia's insistence on signing an agreement on intellectual property rights and modification of certain Indian laws to give an impetus to plans to jointly develop a fifth generation aircraft.

Having obtained a briefing from the Indian Air Force on accidents, Mr. Mukherjee's delegation is expected to insist on a steady supply of quality spares and assistance in replacing some high accident-prone technologies in the largely Russian fleet. Though Rosboronexport, the sole Russian agency for defence exports, has set up an outlet in the country to cater to naval ships and plans to extend its ser-



Pranab Mukherjee

vice to the IAF, India wants a more reliable relationship. Russia has already conceded a key area of concern in this regard. The Russian Ministry of Finance gives a "comfort letter" to India for ensuring adherence to the delivery schedule and New Delhi encash it in lieu of penalty.

The two sides will also touch upon a Russian proposal for jointly manufacturing a medium aircraft that can be configured

for passenger and cargo roles. The IAF's 100-strong medium cargo fleet is ageing and India is weighing the options of modernising them or purchasing new planes. The makers of MiG series of aircraft are also interested in acquainting Mr. Mukherjee with a new fighter version while India would be inquiring about a second modernisation programme for MiG-21s.

From the Russian side, IPR will occupy centre stage in the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission (IRIGC) on Military Technical Cooperation (MTC).

Diplomatic sources here have expressed annoyance over India dragging its feet over signing the IPR and have hinted at stopping supply of crucial spares for missiles and other military equipment.

At the same time, they claim to understand India's dilemma of having to pay royalty and the issue of Russia joining the World Trade Organisation.

India, Nepal lock horns over China

Kathmandu Seeks Beijing's Inclusion, Delhi Against It

By Rajat Pandit/ Times News Network

Dhaka: The simmering tension between India and Nepal ever since King Gyanendra grabbed absolute power in February came to the fore at the Saarc summit here on Saturday, with the two locking horns over China's inclusion as a "dialogue partner" or "observer" in the seven-nation regional grouping.

India wants China to first ink an MoU with Saarc, on the lines of those signed by Japan and Germany, Asean and European Union, before there is any talk of its inclusion as an observer or dialogue partner. But Nepal—and Pakistan and Bangladesh to a certain extent—is pushing for China's immediate inclusion in Saarc. It has even linked an Indian move to include Afghanistan in Saarc with the question of China.

"But Saarc, as of now, has no provision for a dialogue partner or observer," minister of state for external affairs E Ahamed told TOI. Indian officials said the modalities for any country's inclusion into Saarc as a dialogue partner or observer could be worked out at the grouping's standing committee meeting slated for next year.

Though India has now partially lifted the arms embargo on Nepal, imposed after the Deuba government's dismissal in February, by resuming "non-lethal supplies", King Gyanendra is quite effectively playing the China card against India. And China is only too eager to oblige. Beijing, in fact, promised Kathmandu military assistance worth \$1-million recently.

A day ahead of his bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday, King Gyanendra rubbed it in further by holding that Nepal was ready to serve as a "transit point" between India and China and would provide "a level-playing field for both our neighbours to reap the benefits of a promising global economic order". Using the Saarc platform, he tried to justify his takeover, even as he took thinly-veiled potshots at India and some other countries for not supporting it in its fight against the Maoists. "It was aggressive defence. He knows very well that we want him to progressively move towards restoring multi-party democracy, which he is showing no signs of doing," a senior Indian official said.

The King, however, claimed that his move to dismiss the Deuba government was "necessitated by ground realities", mainly the "failure" of successive governments to contain the "ever-emboldening terrorists (Maoists)". "It has not come at the cost of democracy, as some tend to project it," he said. He claimed that the "improved security situation" in his country had allowed it to announce civic polls on February 8 next year, which in turn will create a "conducive environment" for general elections by April 2007.



PM Manmohan Singh with Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga (from left), Pakistan PM Shaukat Aziz and Bangladesh PM Khaleda Zia at the inaugural session of the 13th Saarc summit in Dhaka on Saturday

Manmohan calls for zero tolerance towards terror

Dhaka: Outlining a new vision for Saarc, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday asserted that there should be "zero tolerance" for cross-border terrorism among member states and made far-reaching proposals to step up economic cooperation, enhanced air connectivity and setting up of a regional mechanism for disaster relief and management.

Addressing the twice-deferred Saarc summit here, he said no Saarc nation should allow its territory to be used against the interests of another member state. "There should be zero tolerance for cross-border terrorism and for the harbouring of hostile insurgent groups and criminal elements," he stressed.

India has been concerned over terror camps operating from Pakistan as also north-eastern insurgent groups operating from Bangladesh. Agencies

India's trade with Saarc rises

Indo-Asian News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 6. — India's trade with Saarc countries during April-August reached the Rs 103.96 billion (\$2.29 billion) mark, registering a 17 per cent growth as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year, said an industry study.

What is significant is that the recent thaw in India-Pakistan relations has resulted in 19 per cent growth in bilateral trade during the period under study, said the report that was released yesterday by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI).

"India's exports to Pakistan have gone up by 10 percent. Significantly, answering the longstanding concerns of Pakistan

about the non-tariff barriers faced by their products in India, exports to India have registered a whopping 86 per cent growth during this period," the study stated. "It is indeed significant for India to consolidate its trade relations with Saarc countries to make a success out of South Asia Free Trade Area (Safta), which is scheduled to be launched from 1 Jan, 2006."

PHDCCI president Mr K. N. Memani said: "What is most important is that other Saarc countries have been able to increase their exports to India since some of them are very keen to enhance their market access to the expanding Indian market."

He hoped Pakistan would accord Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to India, to boost bilateral trade and also help

neighbouring countries like Afghanistan, Iran and CIS countries to access the Indian market.

Citing the country's bilateral trade with Sri Lanka as a role model, Mr Memani said that the island country has emerged as India's largest trading partner in Saarc. With a growth of 64 per cent in bilateral trade, which stood at Rs.43.04 billion during April-August 2005-06 fiscal, the island nation has fast outperformed other member countries to proactively engage with India, to its own economic advantage,

the official said. The analysis states it is a matter of concern that Bangladesh, which till the last year was India's largest trading partner in the region is losing out to countries like Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

"Ambiguous policies and investment climate in the country has proved to be a major deterrent for Indian companies keen to enhance trading ties with Bangladesh," the report states.

Bangladesh's share has slipped from 41 per cent of the official exports from India to the whole of the Saarc region during 2003-04, to 30 per cent during the first five months of 2005-06. Like wise, Bangladesh's exports to India constituted hardly six percent of India's imports from the whole of the Saarc region.

Comparatively Nepal accounted for more than 31 per cent of India's import from Saarc countries during April-August 2005-06, while Indian exports to Nepal were 13 per cent of its total exports to Saarc member countries.

7-9
Sri Lanka - Saarc Area Net

TIES ■ Defence Secy to visit Moscow to ease 'stalemate'

India, Russia to ink IPR pact

SHIVAROOR

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 17

IN significant discussions held this morning between the Defence Ministers of India and Russia, the two sides have agreed to conclude soon an agreement on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) that will open the gates for a veritable plethora of military cooperation pacts, stalled for lack of such an IPR understanding.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov informed his Indian counterpart Pranab Mukherjee today in a 50-minute meeting at the South Block that the many proposed joint projects between the two countries would go through once Moscow and New Delhi had their IPR issues sorted out.

Sources said Defence Secretary Shekhar Dutt is likely to visit Moscow before the year-end to ease an "IPR stalemate" which came up when former defence secretary A V Singh had visited Moscow earlier this year.



Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee with his Russian counterpart Sergei Ivanov in New Delhi on Monday

But Ivanov's discussions have also proven that Russia has accepted that its position as India's chief supplier of military hardware is threatened by the US, European and Is-

raeli interests. "This is precisely why it has invited New Delhi to be part of its most ambitious military projects, including the development of a fifth generation fighter air-

craft. India is currently the only developing economy that has been invited to participate in such a project," said a Defence Ministry official.

Talks between New Delhi and Washington on joint development of hardware has made Moscow nervous, especially since it has for long been India's main technology supplier for warships, aircraft and weapon systems.

Ivanov has virtually thrown open Moscow's military inventory to India, giving assurance that any Russian equipment purchased by India will come with technology that allows manufacture and further development in India, the "trump card" that all countries are now waving following new offset stipulations and licensing norms for arms purchases.

In the next three years, Russia will deliver *INS Vikramaditya* aircraft carrier to the Indian Navy with a fleet of 16 deck-based MiG-29Ks, but is now even more keen to bag the much more lucrative deal of 126 fighters for the IAF.

India, Russia conduct first joint exercise

Concept of "interoperability" for counter-terrorism operations introduced

Mohammed Iqbal

BIKANER: The defence forces of India and Russia on Sunday held their first-ever joint airborne military exercise at the Mahajan Field Firing Range, nearly 100 km from here.

The joint exercise was a spectacular show of coordination between the 140 military personnel from the both countries and introduced the concept of "interoperability" against a counter-terrorism backdrop. The top military brass of India and Russia and Russian Defence Minister Sergei Borisovich Ivanov watched the three-hour-long event.

The exercise, codenamed 'Indra', involved raid and destruction of a mock terrorist stronghold with the simultaneous securing of an advance landing ground.

Paratroopers of both countries, who have been training together in Agra for the last few days, launched the hit-and-run operations in a blitzkrieg style.

The objective of the exercise was to strengthen cooperation between the countries to counter terrorism. The western sector was selected for the show in view of its easy accessibility and availability of huge tracts of open desert land.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Borisovich Ivanov said the exercise would herald a new era of defence cooperation with India as a strategic partner and would benefit both the countries through the exchange of information, equipment and experi-



SPECTACULAR SHOW: Chief of the Army Staff Gen. J. J. Singh (left) and Air Chief Marshal S. P. Tyagi (right) along with Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov watch the joint exercise near Bikaner on Sunday. - PHOTO: PTI

ence. This, he said, would help strengthen the fight against international terrorism.

Security perceptions re-assessed

Army Chief J. J. Singh on Sunday said India had reassessed the security perception in Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of infiltration attempts across the Line

of Control following the recent earthquake, and had stepped up the vigil to ensure that no one takes advantage of the quake.

Gen. Singh said the security forces had foiled at least two attempts of infiltration near the LoC after the earthquake and gunned down 25 militants. The country's defence preparedness was "very high" and the Army's

response was "quick and spontaneous," he said.

"The infiltration attempts were acts of desperation which are not going to succeed with our forces keeping the guard up along the LoC. The level of violence has already reduced in both Jammu and Kashmir and the North-East," Gen. Singh said.

While there was no clear picture of the damage caused to militant bases in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir by the earthquake, there were indications that the infrastructure was fairly intact and attempts to cross into Indian territory would continue. The fencing along the LoC had been partially damaged and was being repaired, he said.

Sakhalin-I starts oil production

ONGC Videsh Ltd has 20 p.c.
stake in the oil fields

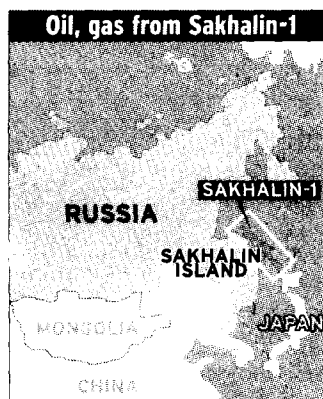
SAKHALIN (RUSSIA): The gigantic Sakhalin-I fields in far east Russia, India's single largest investment abroad, began oil and gas production on Saturday.

Sakhalin-I field, where India's ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) has a 20 per cent stake, will produce 23,000 barrels a day of oil and about 58 million standard cubic feet of gas daily.

R. S. Butola, OVL Managing Director, and Steve Terni, President of Exxon Neftegas, the operator of Sakhalin-I, turned on the valve to start production. Speaking on the occasion, Indian Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar said: "It is not usual for a company from a developing nation to be associated with such kind of a project. For us in India, Sakhalin-I is the beginning of a much longer and deeper association with the island on the east coast of Russia." Russian Minister of Industry and Energy Viktor Borisovich Khristenko said the project marked a new beginning.

Officials said oil production from Sakhalin-I field would rise to 50,000 barrels a day by April 2006 and hit the peak level of 250,000 barrels per day (bpd) by the end of 2006. Gas production will rise to 200 million standard cubic feet a day by next year.

OVL, the overseas arm of State-run Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, purchased a 20 per cent stake in Sakhalin-I project for \$1.7 billion in 2001. In No-



Source: ONGC Videsh

vember, India had approved \$1.1 billion of additional investment in Sakhalin-I. ONGC Videsh plans to ship around 7,00,000 barrels of oil from Sakhalin-I fields to India every 70 days from April 2006. This would be India's first shipment of equity crude oil from the Russian fields.

The Sakhalin-I consortium, comprising Exxon Neftegas Ltd. (the operator)-30 per cent, Japanese Sodeco-30 per cent, Russian RN-Astra LLC-8.5 per cent, and Russian Sakhalinmorneftegaz-Shelf-11.5 per cent, has already hired five ice class tankers on long-term charter. Tankers would be delivered next year and OVL would hire one of these to transport its share of output of around 50,000 bpd (April-November 2006) to India. — PTI

Another report on Page 14

India, Pakistan agree on LoC points

NEW DELHI, Oct. 30. — India and Pakistan have agreed to open the LoC at five points, to allow the movement of relief and people from 7 November.

This was decided in marathon talks yesterday and today at Islamabad between Indian and Pakistani officials. The talks, which started at 10.30 a.m. (Pakistan time), went past midnight, as both sides worked hard to close in on an agreement.

The joint statement released very late last night said the two sides agreed to open crossings at five points on the LoC. These points are Nauseri-Tithwal, Chakoti-Uri, Hajipur-Uri, Rawlakot-Poonch and Tattapani-Mendhar. However, no

vehicular movement would be allowed at these crossings, and only people with proper documents would be allowed to travel on foot. "Non-availability of or damage to infrastructure on these points" was given as the reason for ruling out the movement of vehicles. Further, the travel procedures used for the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service would be also applied for the five LoC crossing points.

This means that people would have to apply for an entry permit, which would be verified by the police. Both sides, however, promised to "expedite the clearance process". — SNS

Another report on page 4

THE HINDU

31 OCT 2005

No Indian soldier to be allowed in PoK: Pervez

Press Trust of India

LONDON/ISLAMABAD/SRINAGAR, Oct. 28. — While adopting a humanitarian approach in the aftermath of the 8 October quake, India and Pakistan would hold talks tomorrow on opening of some points and relief camps along the LoC and finalise the modalities to permit Kashmiris on both sides to meet each other, in London, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has said in an interview to *Financial Times* that he could not allow Indian soldiers to carry out relief work in PoK as his country's "whole defence system and the military is there".

Gen. Musharraf conceded that some Islamist elements, on watch-list, were providing relief in PoK and his government must "beat them to it".

Also today, Pakistan termed India's comments on the situation in Gilgit — following reports of clashes between Sunni and Shia groups last week — as "unwarranted" as, Islamabad felt, these were "inconsistent" with the positive atmosphere being built to resolve all disputes.

Jolt for Hurriyat

The hardline faction of Hurriyat Conference headed by Syed Ali Shah Geelani suffered yet another jolt today when Peoples' League announced disassociation from it. The decision to sever ties with the Hurriyat faction was taken unanimously at a meeting of the Peoples' League yesterday, a People's League spokesman said today, indicating that they would join hands with the moderate faction of the Hurriyat, led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq. People's League, led by Sheikh Abdul Aziz, who was arrested two years ago on hawala charges, is the fourth organisation to leave the Geelani faction since July.

PM's appeal

Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today appealed that no gifts or sweets should be sent to him this Diwali and people should rather donate money to Prime Minister's National Relief Fund.



RELIEF A LONG WINDING STORY: A group of Kashmiris walk down to their remote village with relief materials loaded on their mules, from near the LoC in Tang Daar, on Friday. — AFP

Congress upbeat after J&K

NEW DELHI, Oct. 28. — A day after staking claim for the chief minister's chair in Jammu and Kashmir, following protracted deliberations and frantic parleys, the Congress today appeared upbeat over getting the 16th state under its power belt. The party strongly sought to give an impression that there was no dilemma for Mrs Sonia Gandhi to clinch the issue since the party had a rightful claim on the CM's post in accordance with the 2002 Congress-PDP three-year rotational CM pact. The formality of electing the Congress' CM nominee, Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, will be carried out at the Congress Legislature Party meeting in Srinagar on Sunday morning. The 56-year-old Union minister and Rajya Sabha MP will be sworn in as the new chief minister on 2 November — the stipulated date of the expiry of the three-year tenure of the PDP's incumbent chief minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. The AICC made it clear that the PDP will be given the post of deputy CM as per the "existing pattern" of the Congress-PDP coalition government. The Congress will return to power in J&K after 30 years. The party had last headed a government in the state in 1975 when the then chief minister, Syed Mir Qasim, resigned in February that year to pave way for Sheikh Abdullah to take over the reins of the government following an accord between Abdullah and the Centre. The PDP, meanwhile, allayed all apprehensions that its ties with the Congress would get strained after the transfer of power. The party would extend its "unflinching support" to the Ghulam Nabi Azad-led dispensation, the PDP announced today. "Mufti saheb has requested all of us (MLAs) to extend unflinching support to the new CM," said PDP leader and Jammu and Kashmir finance minister Mr Muzaffar Baig.

CWC reconstitution likely soon

The reconstitution of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) and the restructuring of the AICC may be wrapped up before the AICC plenary session scheduled in the third week of January next year in Hyderabad, adds SNS from Delhi.

Indian delegation to head for Pakistan

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Oct. 27. — The Jammu and Kashmir chief minister, Mufti Md Sayeed, today said that a team of Indian officials would go to Islamabad for working out modalities for a joint quake-relief programme. The resident commissioner of J&K in New Delhi, Mr Parvez Dewan, would go as a member of the team.

Stressing the need to undertake joint relief

operations by India and Pakistan to respond to the grim situation caused by the earthquake across the LoC, the Mufti said several areas in the Neelum and Jhelum valleys were still cut off and the affected people were yet to be provided with relief.

The chief minister announced a hike of Rs 20,000 in cash relief for houses partially damaged by the recent earthquake even as he said that 31,000

temporary dwellings would be constructed for the affected families in view of the fast approaching winter.

Addressing a crowded press conference in Srinagar today, the Mufti said since the winter was fast approaching and Tangdhar would be cut off for the next six months, it was felt that the affected people should get immediate shelter to escape snow and rains.

JOINT RELIEF WORK

"I discussed this issue with the Prime Minister during my visit to New Delhi and proposed to him that temporary dwelling structures be constructed for quake victims as tents were no defence against snow," he said, adding that the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, had accepted the suggestion and asked him to discuss it with the home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil.

After his discussion with Mr Patil, a Central team headed by the secretary,

disaster management, Mr DK Shankaran, today arrived in Srinagar and had a meeting with him where some decisions were taken with regard to the immediate rehabilitation of the affected people.

Announcing the decisions, the chief minister said while owners of fully-damaged house would be provided a cash relief of Rs 1 lakh, for a partially damaged house the owners would now be given Rs 30,000 instead of Rs 10,000 as decided earlier.

LoC camps meet this week

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 24. — Indian and Pakistani officials will be meeting this week to finalise the modalities for cooperation in relief activities across the Line of Control and to reconcile the two concurrent proposals made by both sides on Saturday.

The foreign ministry spokesman, Mr Navtej Sarna, said a team of senior officials will visit Pakistan before the end of this month. He added that the dates of the talks and the composition of the delegation has yet to be finalised.

The Indian suggestion to operate relief and reha-

bilitation camps at Chakan da Bagh, Tithwal and Uri from 25 October has been postponed because "we have to wait for Pakistan's concurrence before we can open these centres", Mr Sarna said.

He said some work is required to set up the relief centres to enable those affected by the earthquake in PoK to reach these relief points and get medical assistance. "Now, work on them can only start after we have received concurrence from Pakistan because this work has to be conducted very close to the LoC," he said.

India had proposed that PoK residents could come to the three centres during

daylight hours and remain as long as medical assistance is required.

Earlier today, Pakistan said it was awaiting India's response to its proposals on opening five points at the LoC for quake relief activities on both sides of Kashmir, PTI adds from Islamabad. "We are ready to discuss the modalities as soon as possible," a Pakistani foreign office spokesman said. The spokesman added that New Delhi's proposal of setting up medical facilities at three points along the LoC was not linked to Pakistan's proposal.

More quake reports on pages 2 & 3

India offers to open three relief centres

Pakistan quake victims can cross
LoC during daylight hours

Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI: New Delhi has informed Islamabad of its proposal to open three relief and medical centres on Indian territory to help earthquake victims living across the Line of Control (LoC), the External Affairs Ministry spokesman said on Saturday.

Quake-hit persons can cross over to the Indian side during daytime. After getting Islamabad's green signal, India will open the relief centres or camps near the Kaman post close to Aman Setu (Uri sector), Tithwal (Tangdhar) and Chakandabagh (Poonch). These are expected to be operational by October 25.

Indian nationals would be free to go to the camps to meet their relatives from the other side of the LoC, the spokesman said at his briefing here. India would arrange for accommodation for residents of the Pakistani side of the LoC so that they could stay overnight and receive relief and medical care.

The Indian decision to open three points along the LoC was in line with the April 18 agreement with Pakistan to allow the divided families to cross the line at the designated place to meet relatives.

Though no details were spelt out, the spokesman said genuine residents from the Pakistani side of the LoC would be allowed to come across to the Indian side.

Some appropriate screening

would be conducted.

Soon after the October 8 earthquake, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh conveyed to Pakistan that New Delhi would undertake relief operations in areas on the Pakistani side of the LoC, which had better access from the Indian side.

On October 15, India permitted Pakistani helicopters to fly close to the LoC provided permission was taken case-by-case. However, Islamabad did not respond to the Indian offer to conduct relief operations on the Pakistani side.

Implementation of Saturday's offer is contingent on Islamabad's consent.

This will be the first instance of direct relief and assistance available to those affected by the quake on the Pakistani side of the LoC.

Pointing out that India had promptly welcomed Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's proposal for greater civilian movement across the LoC, the spokesman said, "We have said that we are waiting for practical suggestions for implementing that proposal. That is a proposal, which has been in line with our policy of closer people-to-people contact across the LoC. This is a follow-up from our side. This is a continuous development of the policy of suggestions to see how we can quickly reach out to the earthquake-affected people. Naturally, this can only happen with the agreement of both governments."

Let's make LoC irrelevant, says Musharraf

"October 8 earthquake is a lifetime opportunity to resolve Kashmir dispute"

B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has said that the October 8 earthquake is a "lifetime opportunity" to resolve the Kashmir "dispute."

In an interview here to the BBC, Gen. Musharraf maintained that it was necessary to identify exactly "what is Kashmir," then demilitarise the identified region, take all the soldiers out and then give self-government to the people in the region.

"I have always believed there is an opportunity of a lifetime to solve the dispute. Now the disaster has struck, I think we should give it deeper thought and resolve the dispute once and for all," he said in response to a question on the future of Kashmir.

Asked about his proposal to throw open the Line of Control (LoC), Gen. Musharraf said, "I believe moving forward is in political terms... let's make the Line of Control irrelevant. Let's open it out, let people come on our side or our people come on their side to help in reconstruction."

In response to a question on the refusal of Pakistan to accept Indian helicopters to reach out to the quake-hit, Gen. Musharraf maintained that his country had enough helicopters there. He said Pakistan did not want to take Indian helicopters with military personnel and went on to ask if India would accept a similar offer from Pakistan. "If I want to send my helicopters to the Indian side I believe I am 200 per cent sure they will not take it," he said.

Gen. Musharraf said there

• "I believe moving forward is in political terms"

• Will India accept our helicopters with military personnel?

• Concerned about rehabilitation phase

were military defence plans, military deployment in PoK similar to that on the Indian side of the LoC and Pakistan did not want Indian military coming there.

"There is the sensitivity of our Army versus their Army, and also the people round here — there's a very big sensitivity. We will not allow that," he maintained.

On the relief and rehabilitation programme, Gen. Musharraf said while he was satisfied with the relief work he was concerned about the rehabilitation phase particularly from the point of view huge resources required and inadequate international response.

"Today I know that we have been donated about \$620 m or something, which is totally inadequate. I believe that it would be more than \$5 b," he said in the context of rehabilitation and reconstruction of the affected.

Gen. Musharraf said the Pakistan military had reached out to most of the affected areas and people. He was confident that before the onset of winter the military and the government would have reached out and hopefully provided even for shelters.

Forget F-16s & accept India's hand, Pak told

By Chidanand Rajghatta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Washington: Pakistan should jettison its fixation with F-16 fighter planes for now and accept India's offer to mount joint operations to save tens of thousands of earthquake victims, domestic analysts and aid officials are telling the military government in Islamabad.

The situation in the quake-hit areas is now considered so serious that UN officials are calling for a Berlin-type airlift to rescue injured and destitute victims who face a rapidly approaching winter. Jan Egeland, the chief UN relief coordinator, is asking NATO to step in for the job, but a US commander has said the alliance does not have enough light helicopters at hand.

Although NATO is best equipped to deal with the looming crisis, officials suggest geographical proximity and logistics point to India as the immediate best hope for Pakistan.

India has nearly 500 helicopters, but Pakistani insistence on not allowing Indian pilots to fly over its territory has delayed rescue operations even as thousands of victims face death from exposure and neglect.

"These discussions (between India and Pakistan) are now holding up a bigger operation and they shouldn't. I would want them to work out a compromise immediately," Egeland told reporters in Geneva, where the UN and developed countries met on Friday for a donor conference.

Egeland complained that the world had not responded adequately to the UN's appeal for money for Pakistan. Only \$86 million of the \$ 312

million sought by the UN had been pledged and even less money had been received in cash. So daunting is the task in Pakistan that even Washington has thrown up its arms about how much it can do.

It suggested that Pakistan should seize the opportunity provided by the tragedy to build trust with India.

But Pakistan's military rulers have been leery of allowing Indian rescue operations, evidently fearing that the sight of Indian choppers bailing out victims will demolish its claims to Kashmir.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's military rulers are being asked to give up their obsession about buying F-16s

The military rulers of Pakistan are afraid that the sight of Indian choppers bailing out quake victims will demolish its claims to Kashmir



fighter jets after the calamity which has brought out the best from the country's civil society while showing the military in poor light.

"In this gravest of emergencies we also need to ask ourselves whether we need to spend about three billion dollars on F-16s," columnist Ayaz Amir wrote in the Dawn newspaper. "It would be an act of sanity if this idea was given up and the saved money put at the service of the children of Kashmir and Hazara."

Amir quoted a retired colonel of the US Air Force, who had served in Pakistan back in the sixties, as telling him "You need F-16s like you need a hole through your collective head."

Washington is expected to clear any day the supply of 76 F-16s to Pakistan in a deal that will cost Islamabad \$3 billion.

2/1/10
5-8

An 'open' LoC

Aug 2008

Emotion or mischief?

Television cameras and press personnel appear to be Pervez Musharraf's version of a thinking cap. Once again he has chosen to "speak" to India courtesy the media, offering one day to open up the Line of Control to people from Jammu and Kashmir wishing to help quake-stricken relatives in PoK, but a day later declaring that he had no "free for all" in mind. All that while New Delhi awaits official communication in that regard so that not only can a comprehensive response be formulated but action initiated to give effect to what might be agreed upon. A charitable view of the Pakistan President's off-the-cuff suggestion would be that it was emotion-driven, the fall-out of virtually unprecedented human suffering. Yet given the fact that only days earlier he had spoken of "sensitivities", surely he would have been aware that for security reasons India would be wary about anything which might facilitate the movement of militants into J&K. Was he playing to the galleries, trying to create an international impression of being prepared to shed the baggage of the past and, to use his own phrase, think "out of the box"? That his suggestion should come just hours after terrorists struck in Srinagar would raise suspicions of his characteristic mischief. For obvious reasons New Delhi could not reject the suggestion outright and rightly has it opted for caution. A position no doubt influenced by the speed with which separatist elements endorsed Musharraf's suggestion. When the Indian leadership had spoken of making borders irrelevant they were most definitely not thinking on the same lines as the General.

So the seeds of another controversy have been sown when both countries ought to have risen above themselves and pooled resources for quake relief. There have been other examples of how the bilateral bickering has not been abandoned. Was it not silly of Pakistan to have sought IAF helicopters but without their crew? Who's operating the choppers that were moved to PoK from other countries? Was it not petty that explanations had to be offered about what kind of help a squad of Indian soldiers provided their Pak counterparts? Did India's security officials elevate themselves by publicly assessing the damage to terrorist-training infrastructure in Balakot. That was, to borrow the Hindi maxim, akin to cooking *kheer* on a funeral pyre. Just how "small" are those in authority on the sub-continent is established by their customary *khich-khich* proving to be quake-resistant.

THE STATESMAN

Movement across LoC only for Kashmiris, says Musharraf

Modalities have to be worked out with India; proposal receives wide acceptance

B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD: A day after floating the proposal to allow any "amount of people" from across the Line of Control (LoC) to take part in the reconstruction efforts of the quake-hit Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has clarified that it would be limited to Kashmiris and the modalities of movement have to be worked out with India.

In an informal talk with correspondents during a tour of the worst-affected areas in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) on Wednesday, Gen. Musharraf said "It [movement across the LoC] can't be free for all." At the same time he maintained that his Government was determined to allow free movement of Kashmiris on either side of the divide.

"Unique distinction"

Separately, Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri claimed that the announcement made by Gen. Musharraf was in conformity with the "unique distinction" of Pakistan's foreign policy.

In an interview to BBC Radio Mr. Kasuri said President Musharraf as well as the Government of Pakistan had displayed courage with regard to the Kashmir issue and relations with India.

"We have kept in view the situation created by this catastrophic earthquake, particularly the Kashmiri brethren

who have been affected on both the sides of LoC." He said the Kashmiris on both the sides of LoC are related to one another.

Wide acceptance

The proposal on easing movement across the LoC has been welcomed by several sections in

Pakistan and PoK including militant groups operating in Kashmir. "It is in line with our position that the Line of Control is an unrealistic line," said Syed Salahuddin, head of the United Jihad Council. "We have never

accepted this Line of Control as a border in the past nor we will accept it in future," Mr. Salahuddin

who is also the chief of Hizbul Mujahideen, told reporters in Muzaffarabad. "We don't think it will have any adverse impact on our freedom struggle. Rather it will strengthen the cause of Kashmiris," he said.

The ruling and Opposition in PoK wholeheartedly endorsed Gen. Musharraf's proposal. The PoK Muslim Conference president, Sardar Atiq, said there was no harm in softening the Control Line and seeking help from across the border.

The former vice-president of PoK, Pakistan Peoples Party, Chaudhry Lateef Akbar said that his party was in favour of opening all the natural routes of Kashmir and not just for the purposes of relief work.

The JKLF chairman Yasin Malik, who arrived on Sunday to help the affected in PoK, has advised India and Pakistan to evolve an acceptable formula to provide relief to the victims without affecting sensitivities of both the countries.

No question of opening up entire LoC: Army

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Reacting to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's announcement, the Government on Wednesday said it would wait for the "actual details" of the proposal.

"There is no question of the entire LoC being opened up for relief operations. Certain routes can be opened. Let the details be analysed by the Ministry of External Affairs. We will also have to look at the security concerns. The security situation is totally under control, and there will

be no let-up in our vigil," Lt. General Madan Gopal.

Director-General of Military Operations, told reporters here. Brushing aside apprehensions that the opening of the LoC would provide newer channels for Pakistan-based militants to cross over into Jammu and Kashmir, he said though there were a few incidents of violence, the basic aim was to provide succour to the quake-affected people in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

"Only a few routes will be opened, which will be sufficient for sending help to

the victims. There is no problem if the right people come through the LoC. There is a humanitarian angle to it; we can surely work out a method," D.K. Sankaran, Secretary (Border Management) in the Union Home Ministry, who is coordinating relief operations in Jammu and Kashmir, said at a press briefing.

Rejecting reports of shortage of tents in the remote areas of Tangdhar, Uri and Baramulla, Dr. Sankaran said that by next week about 30,000 tents would be sent to the Kashmir Valley.

শর্তসাপেক্ষে নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা খুলতে পারে দিল্লি

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৯ অক্টোবর: ত্রাণ কূটনীতিতে পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে পাল্লা দিলেও যথেষ্ট সতর্ক থাকতে চায় মনমোহন সরকার। তাই ত্রাণের জন্য নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা খুলে দেওয়ার প্রস্তাবকে প্রাথমিক ভাবে স্বাগত জানালেও দিল্লি আজ এ ব্যাপারে কিছু শর্ত জানিয়ে দিল।

আজ ডিরেক্টর জেনারেল অফ মিলিটারি অপারেশনস মদন গোপাল স্পষ্ট করে দেন, মানবিকতার খাতিরেও নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা পুরোপুরি খুলে দেওয়ার প্রস্তাব নেই। কারণ তাতে অনুপ্রবেশের সম্ভাবনা ষোল আনার জায়গায় আঠারো আনা। তাই বাস্তব পরিস্থিতি বিচার করেই সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে হবে। মদন গোপালের কথায়, নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা দিয়ে খাদ্য, ওষুধ, তাঁবু-সহ অন্য ত্রাণ সামগ্রী পাঠানো যেতে পারে। স্বাভাবিক ভাবে তা নিয়ে যেতে কিছু লোকও যাবে। কিন্তু ত্রাণের জন্য অবাধে কাশ্মীরিদের যাতায়াত করতে দিলে পরিস্থিতি হাতের বাইরে চলে যেতে পারে। জঙ্গিদের অনুপ্রবেশ রোধ করা অসম্ভব

হবে। আপাতত ভারতের মত, ত্রাণের জন্য শুধু রাজৌরি ও পৃষ্ঠ দিয়ে লোক যাওয়ার অনুমতি দেওয়া যেতে পারে।

পাক অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরে ভারতীয় জওয়ানদের সাহায্যের প্রস্তাব ফিরিয়ে দেওয়ার পরে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ কাল ত্রাণ-কূটনীতির নতুন চাল দেন। প্রস্তাব দেন, এই সঙ্কটে সাহায্যের জন্য জম্মু-কাশ্মীরের বাসিন্দাদের জন্য নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা খুলে দিতে তাঁর সরকারের আপত্তি নেই। নীতিগত ভাবে মুশারফের প্রস্তাবকে কাল স্বাগতও জানায় দিল্লি। তবে সে ক্ষেত্রেও যে মনমোহন সরকার পা মেপেই চলবে, তা আজ স্পষ্ট হয়ে গিয়েছে। আর তার পিছনে আছে দেশের নিরাপত্তারক্ষার ভাবনাচিন্তা।

ভূমিকম্পে পাক অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরে বহু জঙ্গি ঘাঁটি ভেঙে গেলেও ভারতের নিশ্চিন্ত হওয়ার কোনও কারণ ঘটেনি। বরং নিজেদের অস্তিত্ব জাহির করতে জঙ্গিরা যে বড় ধরনের হামলা চালাতে পারে, সেই আশঙ্কা কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের ছিলই। আর আশঙ্কা

সত্যি করেছে গত কাল কাশ্মীরে শিক্ষামন্ত্রীকে হত্যার ঘটনা।

আবার জঙ্গিদের ফোন ট্যাপ করে পাওয়া বেশ কিছু তথ্য আজই স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রককে দিয়েছেন সেনা-গোয়েন্দারা। সেই রিপোর্ট বলছে, ভূমিকম্পের পরে প্রাথমিক ভাবে দুপারের কাশ্মীরে জঙ্গিদের যোগাযোগ বিচ্ছিন্ন হলেও এখন তা ফের স্থাপিত হয়েছে। জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরে ১২০০-১৪০০ সন্ত্রাসবাদী সক্রিয়। গোয়েন্দা রিপোর্ট আরও বলছে, ভূমিকম্পের পরে জঙ্গিরা তাদের হামলার হুক বদলাতে চলেছে। ভূমিকম্পে অনেক সদস্যকে হারানোর পরে তারা আর ঝুঁকি নিতে চাইছে না। তাই ফিদাইন হামলা নয়, এখন সন্ত্রাসবাদীদের নয়। রণকৌশল, 'মারো এবং পাল্লাও।' আর নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা দিয়ে কাশ্মীরিদের অবাধে যাতায়াত করতে দিলে জঙ্গিদের হাতে চমৎকার সুযোগ তুলে দেওয়া হবে।

আজ এই আশঙ্কা প্রকাশ করেছে কংগ্রেসও। দলীয় মুখপাত্র অভিষেক মনু সিংঘবি নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা পুরোপুরি

খোলার যৌক্তিকতা নিয়ে সন্দেহ প্রকাশ করে বলেছেন, কোনও ভাবেই যেন এর জন্য জঙ্গি অনুপ্রবেশ মদত না পায়। মুশারফের প্রস্তাবকে জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলি যে ভাবে স্বাগত জানিয়েছে, তাতে ভারতের আশঙ্কা আরও বেড়েছে। হিজবুল মুজাহিদিনের প্রধান সৈয়দ সালাউদ্দিন মুশারফের প্রশংসায় পঞ্চমুখ। তাঁর কথায়, 'আমরা কখনও নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখাকে সীমান্ত বলে মানিনি। মুশারফের প্রস্তাবে আমাদের কথায় প্রতিধ্বনি শোনা গিয়েছে। ভারতের উচিত একে মেনে নেওয়া।'

পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের প্রস্তাবের সদর্থক জবাব দেওয়া উচিত বলে মনে করছেন ছরিয়ত কনফারেন্সের নরমপন্থী গোষ্ঠীর প্রধান মিরওয়াইজ উমর ফারুকও। এই কূটনীতি এবং রাজনীতির মধ্যে বিপর্যস্ত মানুষ আজ একটি ব্যাপারে স্বস্তি পেয়েছেন। দুই কাশ্মীরের মধ্যে আজ টেলিযোগাযোগ স্থাপিত হয়েছে। টেলিফোনে ওপারে থাকা স্বজনের ভাল থাকার সংবাদটুকুই এখন তাঁদের কাছে অমূল্য।

Quake diplomacy and F-16s

AS Pakistan grieves its dead — the official death toll from the earthquake is now at 38,000 — the world attention is turning to the massive challenges of rehabilitation and reconstruction of Jammu and Kashmir across the dividing line.

Amidst these harrowing moments in J&K, India's own cautious quake diplomacy could easily be derailed by the impending US announcement on the sale of 77 F-16s fighter aircraft to Islamabad.

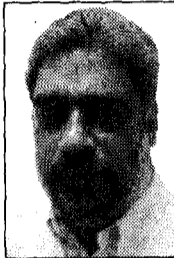
Many in Delhi are itching to project the F-16 sale, which has been in the works for more than a year, as a big failure for Indian diplomacy and a signal of American "tilt" towards Pakistan. All those surprised at the recent positive turn in Indo-US relations are ready to pounce and say, "We told you so; you can't trust the Americans."

While the timing, size and justification for the F-16 deal leaves the establishment in Delhi cold, India would do well to respond in a cold and calculated manner. Knee jerk responses would look good to domestic audiences but could create far too many complications for the triangular relationship with the US and Pakistan.

Indian diplomacy has lobbied for so long in major world capitals against the sale of any weapons systems Pakistan, we have forgotten the original rationale. Protesting against arms sales to Pakistan is a habit we find hard to kick despite the fundamental change in the Indo-Pak military equation since the subcontinent went nuclear in the late 1980s.

In the pre-nuclear age, the acquisition of any major weapons platform by Pakistan had the potential to upset the effective conventional military balance on India's western sector. As a consequence, India had every reason to oppose advanced arms sales to Pakistan, from the US, Europe and China since the 1950s.

With an existential nuclear de-



India's response on the US sale of aircraft to Pakistan must be nuanced

C. RAJA MOHAN

terrence in place, bean counting of military aircraft on either side makes little sense. Incremental addition of new conventional weapons by Pakistan does little to destabilise the military environment in the subcontinent. In any case India's own acquisition of major fighter aircraft in the last few years has ensured a robust air balance with Pakistan. While India has acquired Sukhois from Russia and Mirages from France and the Falcon air defence radar from the Israelis, Pakistan has not purchased any new fighter aircraft over the last decade and a half. Amidst this reality, India's objections to arms sales to Pakistan will have little political credibility.

With an existential nuclear deterrence in place, bean counting of military aircraft on either side makes little sense

India's central security concern no longer lies in the kind of conventional weapons that Pakistan might have in its armoury. India's problems on the Western front arise from Pakistan's ability to conduct with impunity a low intensity conflict under the nuclear gun.

To his unsung credit, Atal Bihari Vajpayee adeptly navigated the complex waters of India-US-Pakistan relationship through the six difficult years of 1998-2004. Instead of merely shouting against close US-Pak ties, he successfully manipulated that relationship to India's advantage.

India's focus under Vajpayee was to mobilise the American

pressure on Pakistan to unconditionally vacate its aggression in Kargil in 1999 and give credible assurances on ending terrorism at the end of the military stand-off during 2001-02. Vajpayee converted one of Pakistan's traditional strengths — the alliance like relationship with the US — into a lever to change Islamabad's political behaviour towards New Delhi.

As the Bush administration readies to notify the US Congress on the F-16 sale any day now, the choice before Manmohan Singh is quite simple. He can either let the old habit of meeting US arms sales to Pakistan with rhetoric prevail. That in turn will destroy his attempt to transform India's rela-

tions with Islamabad and Washington. Or Manmohan Singh can turn the F-16 sale on its head, by embarking on an innovative diplomacy towards the US and Pakistan.

Although many have argued that India and Pakistan have missed the big moment on rethinking their relations after the quake, the reality has been otherwise. Despite its many accumulated sensitivities on Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan has accepted Indian relief and assistance. On its part, India has respected Islamabad's concerns and has largely avoided embarrassing it. As a result there has been tacit cooperation between the two military establishments in a va-

riety of ways. This must be valued and built upon.

A number of assumptions should guide India's quiet diplomacy after the earthquake tragedy. One, Pakistan has been shattered by the quake that has flattened Occupied Kashmir. Empathy and wisdom should guide India at this moment even as it makes a hard-headed assessment of the quake's impact on the terrorist infrastructure in PoK.

Two, American influence in Islamabad is set to rise, as Pakistan struggles to cope with the long-term consequences of the quake. Growing American influence in Pakistan could be an advantage for India, provided New Delhi and Washington agree on next steps in changing the political dynamic in Jammu and Kashmir.

India must signal to the US that it is willing to overlook the F-16 sale if Washington can come with credible assurances from Pakistan that the terrorist infrastructure destroyed in PoK will not be rebuilt after the quake.

Such assurances from Pakistan coupled with a genuine commitment to end cross-border infiltration into J&K should allow India to reciprocate with such measures as an internal ceasefire with the militants and troop reduction in Kashmir.

In recent weeks, India had declared at the highest level that it is prepared to consider such actions if there is sustained evidence of change on Pakistan's approach to cross-border terrorism. The quake provides a rare moment for India to try and make a new beginning in Kashmir.

Instead of being distracted by F-16 sale at this historic moment, New Delhi should focus like a laser beam on ending terrorism once and for all in the state, create the conditions for a purposeful dialogue and lay the foundations for a massive long-term reconstruction of the entire state in cooperation with Pakistan and the international community.

J&K CABINET HOLDS MEETING ■ CASH RELIEF FROM 19 OCTOBER

Pak welcomes India move

SNS & PTI

WPK *Quake* *5.2* *1910*
Quake in Andamans

MANESAR (Haryana)/ISLAM-
ABAD/NEW DELHI, Oct. 16. —
The Centre today ruled out the
possibility of any compromise with
the country's defence due to its
decision to allow Pakistan to fly its
helicopters in the "peace time no-
fly zone" along the LoC. "It should
be seen as a humanitarian gesture.
Whether it is Pakistan, India,
Russia or America, all countries
should help each other during
these crises," Union home minister
Mr Shivraj Patil said in Maneswar.

In Islamabad, a Pakistan For-
eign Office spokesperson expres-
sed the country's happiness over
India's acceding to its request to
grant a "blanket permission" to
operate its helicopters in PoK in
the "peace time no-fly zone" close
to the LoC, revising its earlier
decision to permit choppers on a
case-by-case basis.

India's 3rd consignment
Delhi will send its third consign-
ment of relief material to Pakistan
tomorrow, totalling 170 tonnes, an
MEA spokesman said in Delhi.

PORT BLAIR, Oct. 16. — A
moderate intensity earthquake
today shook the Andaman Islands,
the Indian Meteorological
Department (IMD) said. The
quake, whose intensity was
recorded at 5.2 on the Richter
scale, was experienced at 1529
hours IST. The epicentre of the
tremor lay in the Andaman Islands,
the Met office said. — PTI

In London, the Prime Minister
of PoK, Sardar Sikandar Hayat
Khan, favoured the opening of
the LoC to facilitate relief opera-
tions. "Pakistan could not reach
many areas close to the LoC, and
there were areas not accessible to
India. So, if the borders are
opened, it would be good for citi-
zens on both sides," he said.

J&K Cabinet meet
The Jammu and Kashmir Cabinet
today met under the chairman-
ship of chief minister Mufti
Sayeed and reviewed the relief
work. Cash relief for the quake-
affected people will start from 19
October, the meet decided.



SEARCH ON: An Army jawan with a sniffer dog looks for victims and survivors at Ursu, near the LoC, on Sunday. — PTI

Pakistan denies reports of Indian soldiers crossing LoC

India Pak
11/11/11

"Our fighting bunkers are completely intact because their construction is very robust"

B. Muralidhar Reddy

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan on Thursday denied reports that Indian soldiers crossed the Line of Control to help repair one of its army bunkers after the earthquake.

Media reports in this connection "are fabricated, baseless and untrue," Director-General of Inter Services Public Relations Shaukat Sultan said.

There is "no question" of such a possibility. "Our fighting bunkers are completely intact because their construction is very robust," he said.

Maj. Gen. Sultan also refuted media reports expressing concern over the safety of Pakistan's nuclear installations. They were robust and shockproof. An earthquake or even a direct bomb attack cannot cause any harm to the nuclear installations. "Such reports are being spread by those who don't have any knowledge about such matters." Commenting on the issue, a diplomat said: "I fail to understand why the Indian side should

publicise it even if its soldiers responded to distress calls from the Pakistani side and helped them. Obviously, the Pakistanis cannot be expected to confirm such reports even if they were true, particularly when the matter involves its troops. This kind of scoring a point in such a sit-

uation is meaningless."

Death toll over 25,000

The official death toll from the earthquake rose to more than 25,000. The number of injured was put at 63,000. Islamabad, Peshawar, Abbotabad, Lahore, Malikwal, Gujranwala, Swat

and Mansehra were jolted by fresh aftershocks, measuring 5.5 in the Richter scale, in the early hours of Thursday.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the epicentre was in the northern areas, about 135 km away from Islamabad.

The Pakistan Met office said the jolts were "normal" and there was no cause for concern. As aid workers from various parts of the world moved to the interior areas, the inadequacy of the relief efforts was exposed.

The sheer scale of destruction was "dumbfounding," said UNHCR Assistant Representative in Pakistan Indrika Rattwate. "There were 100-200 people waiting at the landing area in the village of Uri. This was the first time they'd seen any assistance. So, naturally they ran for the food. And once that was gone, they rushed to move the injured onto the helicopter."

Troops gave only tools: Army

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Army on Thursday denied reports that some of its troops crossed the Line of Control (LoC) to help to rescue Pakistani troops and rebuild their bunker destroyed by the October 8 earthquake.

On Wednesday, a Srinagar-based army officer suggested that the troops had responded to a plea for assistance by Pakistani soldiers and crossed the LoC.

"On orders given by the

Prime Minister and the Defence Minister, the Army will help out quake victims in Jammu & Kashmir. But we will not construct Pakistani bunkers," said a senior army officer here. As there was a lot of destruction on the Pakistani side, a patrol party came to the LoC and asked for shovels and pickaxes. Indian soldiers gave the personnel some implements, with which they dug up earth, looking for survivors. They retrieved some weapons and returned the tools.

More reports on Page 13

6 SOLDIERS CROSSED LoC TO ASSIST PAKISTANI TROOPS, NOT TO REBUILD BUNKERS: ARMY

Helping hands dig up a row

Statesman News Service

SRINAGAR, Oct. 13. — Even though Pakistan today said that reports of Indian soldiers crossing the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir to rebuild bunkers were “fabricated and baseless”, the Indian Army today said that its personnel had crossed over unarmed in the Uri sector in response to a request for help from Pakistani soldiers, but said it did not reconstruct any bunkers damaged in the earthquake there. It said the assistance was limited to supplying Pakistani soldiers with tools for evacuating the bunkers.

“Indian soldiers did not reconstruct any Pakistani Army bunkers,” an Army spokesman said in New Delhi, clarifying that the soldiers had gone across unarmed to give Pakistani soldiers picks and shovels to remove the debris of some pillars of Aman Setu, which collapsed on the Pakistani side.

The Pakistan defence spokesperson, Major General Shaukat Sultan, said that no Indian soldier had crossed the LoC to help rebuild bunkers. However, the spokesman of 15 Corps of Army, based in the Badami Bagh cantonment here, said that Pakistan had requested the unit to help it retrieve ammunition from a bunker which caved in at Kaffian. “Six of our (Indian) soldiers crossed the LoC near Aman Setu to help Pakistani soldiers dig out the arms and ammunition buried under the rubble of a bunker. Soon after, they returned to the Indian territory,” the spokesperson said, adding, that Pakistani soldiers guarding Aman Setu on the PoK side had personally sought the help of their Indian counterparts. The General Officer Commanding, 15



A Pakistani from Muzaffarabad in PoK hugs his Indian bus driver before returning to Pakistan on foot at the Wagah border, on Thursday. Having come in by the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus, Pakistanis have been unable to avail themselves of the service on the return leg as Saturday's earthquake damaged the roads. — AFP

Corps, Lt Gen SS Dhillon, told reporters that Indian soldiers had helped the Pakistani army-men spontaneously. “Soldiers of two armies got together on humanitarian grounds in the hour of crisis,” he said. Aman Setu connects J&K with PoK.

Two more Indian nationals from J&K, Mr Jagdish Lal Tandon and Mr Subhash Tandon, who were in PoK when the devastating earthquake hit the region, were today airlifted by the Pakistani army to Islamabad.

As the toll of civilians in the quake touched 1,300 in J&K, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today appealed to people to contribute generously towards relief efforts.

Fresh tremors were felt around 1:50 a.m. (IST) in J&K today, especially in Uri and Tangdhar, triggering panic. An aftershock measured 5.8 on the Richter Scale. There were no reports of damage or casualties.

Editorial: Gory gloating, page 6
More reports on pages 2, 4 & 9

After plane, train to Pakistan

NEW DELHI, Oct. 13. — A day after sending a planeload of relief supplies to Pakistan, India will be sending a second shipment, but this time by train. This consignment will be larger — 82 tonnes compared to 25 tonnes — flown in by the IAF's *Ilyushin-76* plane yesterday. It will include 12 tonnes of medicines, 5 tonnes of plastic sheets, 5,000 blankets and 370 tents. The supplies are being sent by a train leaving Delhi tonight. It will take the Attari-Wagah route. The Pakistan President made a special mention of Indian assistance in his televised address to the nation last night. He said that the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, “was very kind to ring me up and offer all possible assistance”, adding: “We express our gratitude to him and we have accepted Indian aid in a certain form.” The “certain form” doesn't include the Indian offer for military help to reach quake-hit villages in PoK, accessible from this side of the LoC that the Pakistani authorities rejected. — SNS

QUAKE Army personnel cross debris of Kaman Post and Aman Setu to help Pak rebuild bunkers

Jawans cross LoC to lend a hand to Pak

MUZAMIL JALEEL
NEAR KAMAN POST,
OCTOBER 12

IT'S a few small steps but here, in a region where standing eyeball to eyeball is second nature, it's a huge leap across a gaping divide.

For the first time, Indian soldiers today crossed the Line of Control to help Pakistani soldiers in relief and rescue.

This happened near the col-

lapsed Aman Setu, the steel symbol of the Indo-Pak peace process. Kaman Post, India's last bunker overlooking the bridge, is in shambles but many soldiers were lucky. Not so on the other side.

So yesterday, when two officers and four men of the Pak Army came looking for their colleagues, Indian jawans came out of the rubble of Kaman Post, crossed the KDK nallah into Pakistan-occupied

Kashmir to offer help. But the Pak soldiers left after surveying the damage.

Today, a group of 10 Pak soldiers appeared on the curve, where once the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road took a left turn towards Chakoti, and asked for help. "Then our jawans crossed over (the LoC) and helped them reconstruct their bunker," Col Hemant Joneja of Army's 15 Corps confirmed to *The Indian Express*.

Army officials said that given that the damage is much more severe on the Pakistani side of the Line of Control, there was little chance of finding Pak Army survivors. But the new cooperation has brought in new hope.

Col Joneja says that Indian Army personnel deployed in forward bunkers in Tangdhar had also offered help to Pak soldiers who had come for rescue missions.

The Pakistan Army recently returned an Indian soldier after he had inadvertently crossed the LoC while escaping nature's fury. The first-ever airforce cargo plane carrying relief material too has flown to Islamabad.

The Army says that there are several places along the LoC where the quake triggered landslides threw bunkers along with many jawans across into Pak-controlled territory. In

Tangdhar, 15 soldiers fell in a gorge across the LoC and their bodies are yet to be retrieved. Then the bodies of jawans of the Gorkha Rifles, killed when their bunker fell from the Dulanja hilltop into the Jhelum river, too are believed to have been washed across the LoC with the water. "We are very positive and are ready to help in whatever way we can," a senior army officer says. "We all are human beings."

PM offers Pak access to PoK

By M Saleem Pandit/TNN

Srinagar: Another door of camaraderie in these troubled times was opened by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Tuesday when he offered Pakistan access to quake-affected areas in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir through Indian territory.

On a one-day visit to the calamity-affected state on Tuesday, the PM said the option could be exercised if Pakistan had no objection. He said the Centre would also consider developing a telephone link with PoK to enable the people in J&K to know the welfare of their relatives across the LoC. Singh declared Saturday's earthquake as a national calamity and said the Centre would provide all possible help to the state government to cope with the situation.

Speaking at a press conference, Singh said, "I have come to share the grief and sorrow of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and

houses destroyed in Uri and Tangdhar," he added. The Prime Minister said people in Uri and Tangdhar immediately need tents, blankets, drinking water. Subsequently, there would be need to construct houses before the onset of winter, he said.

"Housing is the biggest problem. While tented accommodation will be adequate for immediate shelter needs, winter is setting in soon. People need protection against cold weather," he said, adding that pre-fabricated houses or other appropriate option would be explored. No resources will be spared and we will use the services of every agency, central and state, to ensure proper housing facilities in the quickest possible time, Singh said.

He equally shared the grief of neighbouring Pakistan and said he had already spoken to president Pervez Musharraf and conveyed heartfelt condolences for the dead in Pakistan and PoK.



A Russian rescue worker searches for survivors among the debris of a collapsed school in Muzaffarabad on Tuesday

looking at the destruction, I have sanctioned additional relief of Rs 500 crore for rehabilitation of quake-hit areas." A relief package of Rs 100 crore had already been sanctioned, in addition to the Rs 42 crore the state had set aside to deal with such calamities. "Money would be no constraint," Singh assured.

Driving home the gravity of the situation, the PM said 1,300 people had died, with the numbers only rising as the rescue operation progresses. "There are 4,500 people injured and around 32,000

PAK REFUSES JOINT RESCUE ■ LOOTING SPREE IN PoK

India readies relief

SNS & Agencies

NEW DELHI/ISLAMABAD, Oct. 10. — India has a plane-load of relief supplies ready to fly to Pakistan tomorrow evening — probably the first relief mission to the neighbouring country since 1971. Islamabad today accepted New Delhi's aid offer.

India has also offered to send relief material and Army rescue teams to those parts of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir which are accessible from the Indian side, but cannot be reached by the Pakistani authorities.

The green light for relief materials was given by Pakistan following a meeting of the Pakistan high commissioner, Mr Aziz Ahmed Khan, with Dr Manmohan Singh today. The foreign secretary, Mr Shyam Saran, was also present.

Mr Saran later told reporters that there "was no indication" that there would be a joint operation for relief and rescue for the quake-affected, but added that India had proposed to send its Army personnel and medical teams to areas along the LoC which are not accessible from Pakistan. He added that Pakistan has noted the offer and would deliberate on it.

Earlier in Islamabad, a Pakistan foreign office spokesperson had said there was "no possibility" of any joint relief operations on both sides of the LoC, stating that there is "no

Suspension of violence

SRINAGAR, Oct. 10. — Following the killer quake, the Jihad Council, an amalgam of 14 militant outfits based in PoK, has announced temporary suspension of its operations in J&K. The decision to temporarily suspend the operations in the state was taken at a meeting convened by the chairman of the council and supreme commander of Hizbul Mujahideen Syed Salahuddin at Muzaffarabad yesterday, a local news agency quoting a fax from the outfit said here today. Salahuddin asked all the constituents of the council to direct the militants across the state to halt their operations in the affected areas and extend relief to the victims. — PTI

population" on the de-facto border.

During his meeting with the Pakistan high commissioner, the Prime Minister reiterated "profound sympathies" on the massive loss of life and said that Indians have been "deeply moved" by images of destruction and human suffering beamed on TV channels for the past few days. In response, the high commissioner said that in Islamabad, the foreign ministry had called a meeting of heads of missions of friendly countries, who were handed a list of essential materials which could be supplied on a priority basis. "He (the high commissioner) said that any assistance from India in the form of such materials would be deeply appreciated. We understand that the

items required include tents, plastic sheets, blankets, mattresses, food items and a variety of medicines and medical supplies," said Mr Saran.

He added that there was a "very good atmosphere" at the LoC in the wake of rescue operations by military personnel on that side of the border. Citing an example, he said helicopters usually avoid flying near the LoC. "But we are allowing Pakistani helicopters to come near the LoC. Similarly, they are also allowing the same to our helicopters."

Meanwhile, grief gave way to anger as hungry victims of the devastating earthquake in PoK looted army vehicles carrying food, tents, blankets and medicines, and clashed with shopkeepers. Local daily the News reported that the toll may cross 40,000 with maximum fatalities in PoK and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). However, interior minister Mr Aftab Sherpao told the Cabinet that the toll was 20,745.

The USA today pledged \$50 million for quake relief. Officials said they hoped the gesture would show sometimes skeptical Pakistanis that Washington was a true ally. Two days after the disaster, rescue teams and supplies have arrived from at least 10 countries with everything from jerry cans and tarpaulins to Black Hawk copters for heavy lifting and hi-tech cameras for finding buried survivors.

More reports on page 2 & 3

THE STATESMAN

No deadline for Siachen, says Natwar

“Peace process moving forward”

B. Muralidhar Reddy

KARACHI: External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh said here on Wednesday that he hoped the India-Pakistan talks on the Siachen issue would move forward.

Talking to reporters before leaving for New Delhi at the end of a four-day visit to the country, he said that “there is no deadline for Siachen, but we hope the talks will move forward.”

A joint statement issued on Tuesday said the two sides exchanged ideas on Siachen and agreed to continue discussions to arrive at an understanding before the next round of the composite dialogue in January.

To a question, Mr. Singh said, “On some issues there can be no hurry. On some others, there is speedy movement.” Referring to the joint statement, he said, “Concrete issues figured in it, which is good for the dialogue process.”

He hoped that in the coming days, there would be further movement with regard to the peace process. “The peace process is moving forward. But it does not mean that all problems have been resolved.”

Earlier, reaching out to the people of Sindh, he said in the coming weeks India would not only be able to issue visas to people of the region but also open up the rail route linking Sindh with Rajasthan.

Mr. Singh flew down here from Islamabad for a first-hand assessment of the renovation work on the Indian Consulate.

The people of Sindh are not as enthused with the peace process as their counterparts in Punjab as, in their perception, they have not gained anything tangible from it. Since 70 per cent of the visa seekers to India are from Sindh and the port city of Karachi, there have been demands for the re-opening of the Indian Consulate. It was shut down in the mid-1990s after Pakistan accused it of indulging in activities incompatible with its status.

After the Khokrapar-Munna-bao rail link between Sindh and Rajasthan was shut down, the people are forced to travel via Lahore and New Delhi to reach Rajasthan.

Mr. Singh made full use of his stay by interacting with representatives of the Pakistan People's Party and the Muttahida Quami Movement. On a trip to the city after 23 years, the Minister got an opportunity to meet up with old friends and acquaintances. During his tenure as the Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad in the 1980s, Mr. Singh made several friends. The nostalgia was evident as he met them at the reception hosted by the Sindh Chief Minister.

Mr. Singh told a small gathering of the Karachi elite at the Consulate premises that efforts were being made to finish the restoration work by December 31.

“We want visas to be issued here from January. This will save the people of Karachi the trouble of going to Islamabad for getting visas.”

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2005

Heartening progress on Siachen

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While India and Pakistan did not achieve a breakthrough on the issue of demilitarising the Siachen Glacier, there is clearly reason for optimism. It is unlikely that Foreign Ministers Natwar Singh and Kurshid Mahmood Kasuri would have set a short deadline for reaching a "common understanding" unless they were confident about the prospects. New Delhi and Islamabad intend to make an integrated approach to the six facets of the dispute so that progress can be made before the third round of the composite dialogue gets under way in January 2006. They will need to pinpoint positions currently held by the two armies; agree on the lines to which their troops shall withdraw; arrive at a definition of the area of disengagement; create a regime to monitor the pullback; set up a verification mechanism to rule out future violations; and settle the alignment of the Line of Control beyond the grid reference point NJ 9842. In deciding to tackle the issue in an integrated fashion rather than sequentially, the two Governments have given themselves an excellent chance of making progress. If they can agree on the mechanism that will verify compliance with the agreement, the certification of the Actual Ground Position Line, a tricky process, might not be necessary. Efforts at demilitarising the Siachen area have made little headway (despite a tentative agreement reached in 1989) largely because the two countries have not been able to get around the problem of certification. New Delhi wants Islamabad to certify that the Indian Army held the Salto ridge before the pullback. Pakistan has refused to do so on the ground that it would be tantamount to certifying 'aggression.' If problems of this nature can be tackled in technical-level talks over the next three months, the two Governments can indeed achieve a breakthrough.

As for the Sir Creek dispute, India and Pakistan appear to be making a sincere effort to move forward. They propose to undertake a joint survey and consider options for the delimitation of the maritime boundary. However, it is unclear whether the two sides have exchanged views on the principles of international law that should apply in this case. They have made an effort to mitigate the hardship fishermen undergo on account of the non-demarcation of this boundary by agreeing to set up a hotline between the Indian Coast Guard and the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency. India and Pakistan should abandon the practice of arresting fishermen who inadvertently cross into their territorial waters and instead institute a mechanism for the informal repatriation of these innocents. A series of technical-level meetings will be held over the next few months to consider several humanitarian and confidence-building measures. The earnest hope is that these talks will result in agreements on running a truck service between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar, and bus services on the Poonch-Rawalkot and Amritsar-Nankana Sahib routes, as well as arrangements for divided families to meet at points along the LoC.

Neighbours discuss Siachen

NEW DELHI, Oct. 4. — India and Pakistan have decided to continue discussions to arrive at a “common understanding” on Siachen before January. A joint survey of Sir Creek will also be conducted, while modalities of meeting points for divided families along the Line of Control will be finalised by December.

The joint statement issued today at the end of talks between foreign minister Mr Natwar Singh and his Pakistani counterpart Mr Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri in Islamabad said that both the ministers resolved to carry forward the peace process and that the settlement of the Kashmir problem would be explored in a “sincere, purposeful and forward-looking manner” unimpeded by terror.

On Siachen, the two sides “agreed to continue their discussions to arrive at a common understanding before commencement of the next round of the Composite Dialogue in January next year”. The two leaders welcomed the decision to launch an Amritsar-Lahore bus service in November and noted that an Amritsar-Nankana Sahib service would start shortly thereafter.

In a meeting of the Joint Commission, revived after 16 years in Karachi, the two countries today established a Joint Working Group to discuss lifting of a ban on Indian TV channels here, liberalising visa procedures and ease travel restrictions faced by journalists from both countries.

Musharraf on Sarabjeet

The Pakistan President today assured India that he would take a “humanitarian view” of Sarabjeet Singh’s predicament, sentenced to death here on charges of triggering blasts in 1990.

Statement highlights, page 4

14

India, Pak ink pact 9/10 on missile tests

Islamabad: Taking a major step towards confidence building, India and Pakistan on Monday signed accords on pre-notification of ballistic missile tests and setting up of a communication link between Indian Coast Guard and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency.

The pacts were inked after external affairs minister K Natwar Singh and his Pakistani counterpart Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri held talks here to review the progress in the Composite Dialogue process involving eight outstanding issues, including Siachen and terrorism.

Singh and Kasuri held an hour-long delegation-level talks and followed it up with one-on-one meeting. "The talks went off in a very cordial atmosphere," Kasuri, flanked by Singh, told reporters. Neither of the ministers gave any details of what transpired at the talks with both saying that they would meet the press on Tuesday.

The agreement on pre-notification of missile tests was signed by foreign secretary Shyam Saran and his Pakistani counterpart Riaz Mohammad Khan in the presence of the two foreign ministers. The agreement entails that both countries provide each other advance notification before undertaking any surface-to-surface ballistic missile test. An understanding in this regard was reached between the two countries at the third round of Nuclear CBM talks



Natwar Singh and Khurshid Kasuri interacting with the press

held on August 5-6 in New Delhi.

India had presented a draft on pre-notification of the tests during the first round of expert-level talks on Nuclear CBMs in June 2004. During the second round of the talks held in December last year, detailed discussions were held on the draft agreement on the issue and positions were brought closer.

India handed over a draft MoU on measures to reduce the risks of accidental or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons under the control of both countries at last round of talks on Nuclear CBMs. The MoU on establishment of a communication link between the Coast Guard and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency was signed by Coast Guard director general Vice Admiral A K Singh and PMSA Director General Rear Admiral Bakhtiar Mohsin. Agencies

India, Pakistan to notify each other before missile tests

HD-1
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Natwar Singh, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri review status of composite dialogue



BRIDGING COMMUNICATION GAP: Indian Coast Guard Director General Vice-Admiral Arun Kumar Singh (right) and his Pakistani counterpart Admiral Bakhtiar Mohsin sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of a communication link in Islamabad on Monday. Standing at centre are External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh and his counterpart Khurshid Kasuri (second from left). - PHOTO: AP

B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD: India and Pakistan signed an agreement on Monday making it obligatory for them to notify the other at least 72 hours before testing ballistic missiles within a 40 km radius of the International Boundary and the Line of Control (LoC).

The pact, which culminated after months of discussions, was signed here in the presence of External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh and his Pakistani counterpart, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri. Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and his Pakistani counterpart, Riaz Mohammad Khan, signed the agreement after a 90-minute meeting of the Ministers in which the status of

the composite dialogue was reviewed. The pre-notification agreement entails the countries to provide each other advance notification before undertaking any surface-to-surface ballistic missile test. Both sides are currently engaged in examining the details of a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on measures to reduce the risks of accidental or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons. "The talks went off in a very cordial atmosphere," Mr. Kasuri told reporters at the Foreign Office. All the eight subjects listed in the composite dialogue format, including Kashmir, came up for scrutiny.

Pakistan laid emphasis on the need to quicken the pace of ne-

gotiations, particularly on the settlement of the Kashmir dispute, without getting into specifics. The Indian response was that dialogue covered all outstanding issues, and New Delhi expected a conducive atmosphere to continue the process.

A MoU establishing communication links between the Coast Guard and the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PSMA) was also signed. Coast Guard Director-General A.K. Singh and PMSA Director-General Bakhtiar Mohsin inked the pact.

The communication link would help facilitate the early exchange of information on fishermen who inadvertently stray into each other's territories and also information on smuggling,

pollution and search and rescue operations.

Informal interaction

After the signing ceremonies, the Ministers flew to the Nathiagali hill station for an informal interaction over lunch hosted by Mr. Kasuri. "The idea is to enable the two Ministers have a heart-to-heart in an idyllic setting," an official said.

Asking the media not to read much into the luncheon engagement, the Indian side recalled that the former Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who visited the hill resort four decades ago, described it as one of the most beautiful places on the Earth. Besides, this was the place where the former U.S. Secretary of

State, Henry Kissinger, stayed incognito when Washington was trying to establish secret contacts with Beijing with Pakistan's help.

The Ministers will meet again tomorrow to mark the revival of the India-Pakistan Joint Commission, which last met in 1989. The main agenda before them is to decide on the contours of the Commission, as several subjects in the old format are now part of the composite dialogue. A joint statement is expected at the end of the meeting.

Mr. Singh is also scheduled to make a courtesy call on Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Tuesday before flying to Karachi.

Natwar in Pakistan to give new thrust to peace talks

*Indi
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HO-1 27/10*

People want peace process to be faster: Kasuri

B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD: External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh arrived here on Sunday night leading a 15-member high-level official delegation from five Ministries to give further impetus to the India-Pakistan peace dialogue.

In the course of his four-day stay here, both sides will ink two agreements related to pre-notification of flight-testing of ballistic missiles and establishment of communication links between the Indian Coast Guard and the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PSMA).

Mr. Singh, his second visit in a span of less than eight months, told the media at the airport that the frequency of high-level visits between the two sides was "reflective of the positive momentum" of the bilateral relations between India and Pakistan.

The basic objective of Mr. Singh's bilateral visit is to review

• Accord on pre-notification of flight-testing of ballistic missiles in the offing

the status of the composite dialogue with Pakistan and to mark the revival of the India-Pakistan Joint Commission after a gap of 16 years.

There is a conscious effort on both sides to remove the perception created by a section of the media that the recent contact between Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New York on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly brought about a slump in the bilateral ties.

It was against this backdrop that Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri said hours before Mr. Singh landed here that Islamabad attached a

lot of "importance" to his visit. Observing "many people want the peace process to be much faster," Mr. Kasuri said he would take up the issue with Mr. Singh during the talks on Monday.

Mr. Singh said it was the overwhelming desire of the peoples of both the countries to have friendly relations and the two governments responded to these sentiments and would work towards positive deliberations in the next three days.

The pre-notification pact to be signed by the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan in the presence of the Foreign Ministers commits both sides to pre-notify in a structured format flight-testing of ballistic missiles within 40 km radius of the borders of both sides.

The objective of the agreements to enhance mutual confidence and engender predictability and transparency of intent.

More CBMs as Natwar's off to Pak

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

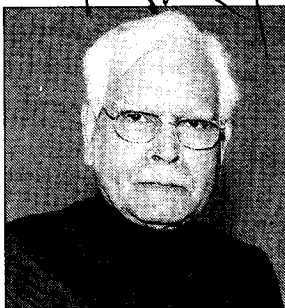
New Delhi: On the eve of foreign minister Natwar Singh's visit to Pakistan, the cabinet committee on security (CCS), chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday, gave a green signal to the ministry of external affairs to negotiate wide-ranging liberalisation in visa and consular services with Pakistan.

During his visit, Natwar will sign two agreements—on prior notification of ballistic missile tests and a hotline between the Coast Guard and the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency. India will propose amendments to the 1982 and 1974 accords with Pakistan to include the following: India and Pakistan will notify each other immediately after the arrest of civilians from either country; consular access should be granted within three months and both sides should agree to exchange lists of prisoners twice a year—January 1 and July 1.

This, officials say, will help ease the problems that civilian prisoners face in either country. The issue has acquired greater urgency after the intense public interest in the Sarabjit case.

India will also propose amendments to facilitate travel of citizens for medical treatment as well as pilgrims to shrines in the other country. In Islamabad, the Indian delegation will make a pitch for an extradition treaty with Pakistan and a mutual legal assistance treaty.

For India, the aim of the peace process is to ease the barriers between the countries while keeping a strict vigil on security issues. Therefore, officials said they would raise the issues



For India, the aim of the peace process is to ease the barriers between the countries while keeping a strict vigil on security issues

of increased terrorist violence in India and the infrastructure of terrorism, i.e. terrorist camps in Pakistan which are still spewing militants into J&K. Officials said any talk of a resolution of the Kashmir issue would only happen after terrorism had verifiably ended. This will pour cold water on Pakistan's hopes of trying to hurry along a resolution.

Meanwhile, India will focus on other aspects of bilateral ties. The MEA team will make a presentation on tourism prospects for Pakistanis in India, including group tours, and even give a list of approved tour operators in India. This, despite the fact that Pakistan recently refused visas to Indians wanting to participate in a Lahore tourism fair. India will also make a presentation projecting the growth potential of trade—Indian optimism has increased after Pakistan allowed the import of essential commodities recently.

Siachen: need for accord on ground position line

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1/10
Pawar Pankaj

Both sides should also decide on the area occupied by the troops

Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Redeployment of Indian and Pakistani troops in the Siachen will be possible provided the two sides agree on the current actual ground position line, official sources said ahead of External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh's visit to Pakistan from October 2 to 5.

India and Pakistan would also have to arrive at an understanding on what would be done with the area where the troops were currently deployed. The sources indicated that India favoured plotting the further course of Line of Control, which stops at Point NJ9842.

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, during his visit to New Delhi in April, agreed that there should be some form of verification of the actual ground positions in the Siachen, the sources said.

However, there was not much change in the Pakistani position at the subsequent talks between the Defence Secretaries. India remained hopeful of making progress.

Referring to Sir Creek, the sources seemed to suggest that there were no major differences. The problem lay in plotting the

maritime boundary after a joint survey by the two sides.

While conceding that Pakistan wanted "progress" on Kashmir, the sources ruled out the possibility of territorial changes. The peace process, they argued, would go forward if cross-border terrorism was addressed.

During Mr. Singh's visit to Islamabad and Karachi, the India-Pakistan Joint Commission would meet for the first time after 1989. The two sides would also review the progress made after the second round of the composite dialogue.

Two accords — one on pre-notification of missile tests and the other putting in place a direct communication link between the Indian Coast Guard and the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency — would be signed during Mr. Singh's visit.

India would raise the issue of a possible extradition treaty as well as a mutual legal assistance treaty. Also, New Delhi wanted a larger number of pilgrims and more religious centres added to the list between India and Pakistan.

New Delhi would provide Islamabad with a list of approved tour operators to promote group tours from Pakistan.