

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2004

Handwritten: 40-12, 29/12

BLOSSOMING PARTNERSHIP

Handwritten: Abdullah Ahmad Badawi

MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's first state visit to India could not have come at a better time. India's 'Look East' policy is firmly in place. Its ties with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have been strengthened in the evolution of a full-fledged partnership, which was strategised during the recent ASEAN-India Summit in Vientiane. Malaysia is India's largest trading partner in the Southeast Asian region. Historical and cultural ties, whose potential was not seriously tapped until the mid-1990s, have been cemented with trade and investment links. With the two Governments signalling their eagerness to move closer, the private sector in the two countries has moved much faster than officialdom. Bilateral trade is expected to reach \$4.5 billion this year, but it is still nowhere near what it should be. A year after he took over and within months of winning his first election as Prime Minister, Mr. Badawi has taken the opportunity to visit New Delhi, to firm up the relationship with India, and strike a rapport with Manmohan Singh, a development-minded Prime Minister who is keenly interested in deepening the bilateral ties.

Aside from meeting the top Indian leaders, Prime Minister Badawi, who brought with him a strong delegation of Malaysian trade and industry, spent productive time with representatives of Indian industry. About a dozen agreements and MoUs have been signed, but it is important to take them beyond the paper on which they are inked. The two sides know each other's strengths — India's knowledge-industry base and manufacturing skills and Malaysia's business acumen and organisation, construction industry, and agriculture. Malaysian companies have won several contracts in India. Highways, ports, and airports can benefit from their experience and investment, just as they will find in India a high calibre partner in several sectors such as infor-

mation technology, space, and regional security. As Mr. Badawi has suggested, it will be very worthwhile for the two private sectors to synergise their strengths and seek to penetrate third country markets. Moving towards the now-clichéd "strategic partnership" or a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement becomes easier with a "convergence of views." Countries in Southeast Asia are moving beyond Free Trade Agreements to a comprehensive cooperative framework. A visit to Malaysia by Prime Minister Singh in the near future should help seal such an agreement, which is also being finalised with Singapore.

Meanwhile there are a few sticking points that must be sorted out. Prime Minister Badawi needs to ensure that his colleagues in the Cabinet and the bureaucracy really appreciated the push given by his predecessor Mahathir Mohamad for closer ties with India. In recent years, Malaysia would appear to have realised the value of Indian tourists, whose numbers have increased in geometric proportion from the day the visa regime was liberalised. There are serious problems too with work permits — and specifically for the IT professionals employed in Malaysia. The local immigration authorities have at times been unable to distinguish between qualified professionals with proper permits and semi-skilled workers who tend to over-stay. A mechanism is urgently needed to identify the agents who recruit such workers so that the issue does not become an irritant in bilateral relations. Finally, Malaysia and India can work together to develop the process of ASEAN + 3 (that is, Japan, China, and South Korea) into ASEAN + 4. Prime Minister Badawi also knows that the East Asian Economic Caucus, which Malaysia envisages, will become more meaningful with the inclusion of India, taking it a step closer to the Asian Economic Community that the recent ASEAN summit in Vientiane visualised.

24 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

India, Malaysia ink 12 MOUs

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 20. — Indian and Malaysian companies today signed 12 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) in diverse fields, including provision of technical services for development and operation of an international airport in Hyderabad.

The MoUs cover a diverse field, including manufacturing, IT, biotechnology, engineering and pharmaceuticals. They were signed here in the presence of the Malaysian Prime

Minister, Mr Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who described the current volume of Indo-Malaysian trade as inadequate.

“Over the last nine years there has been a 500 per cent increase in India-Malaysia trade and our bilateral trade will rise beyond \$ 4.5 billion this year.

“India’s total imports from Malaysia accounted for only 3.4 per cent while that of Malaysia’s was 0.8 per cent. These statistics indicate the large upside potential for both Malaysia and India,” Mr Badawi told a business forum organised by

The MoUs cover a diverse field, including manufacturing, IT, biotechnology, engineering and pharmaceuticals. They were signed here in presence of the Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi

the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).
The Malaysian Prime Minis-

ter underlined the need to deepen economic and trade cooperation between the two countries through a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and invited Indian businessmen to suggest a framework to maximise the gains from such a trading arrangement.

He said Indian entrepreneurs had invested nearly a billion dollars in Malaysia, but it appeared “very little” compared to the vastness of opportunity.
He sought Indian investment as well as technical expertise in the field of information tech-

nology, manufacturing, biotech, engineering and pharmaceuticals. Tax incentives, he promised, would be provided to the investors.
“I would like to know the expectations of business from the two sides so that the mutual aspirations could be reflected in the FTA to make it viable and workable,” Mr Badawi said, assuring the Indian industry and trade that all roadblocks in the way of efficient functioning of free trade would be removed, including lacunae in financial and banking arrangements.

Justin - S B Anis

Badawi suggests trade agreement

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 20. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, today suggested "some form of free trade agreement" with India to catalyse greater economic and trade cooperation between the two countries.

On his first visit to India after assuming office, Mr. Badawi said as India "looked east", Malaysia was "looking west" at India and West Asia. "Let me be patently clear — I am here to build new bridges, construct new economic alliances, and generate fresh economic cooperation. And I do so in the cause of our common future in an increasingly competitive world."

Mr. Badawi, who held discussions with the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and called on the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, said bilateral trade had gone up from a paltry \$467 million to \$3.2 billion last year. Pointing out that Malaysia was India's largest trade partner in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), he said trade this year would cross \$4.5 billion.

Three agreements were signed

in the presence of the Prime Ministers — one between Antrix Corporation Ltd., commercial arm of the Indian Space Research Organisation, and the Measat Global to pool their satellite capacities, a letter of intent between Antrix and Measat on procurement of Measat-4 satellite and an agreement for construction of a new international airport in Hyderabad.

The consortium of GMR Infrastructure Limited and Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad has been selected by the Andhra Pradesh and Central Governments following a competitive bidding process to develop a Greenfield international airport through public private partnership at Shamshabad near Hyderabad, about 20 km from the existing airport at Begumpet.

12 MoUs signed

Twelve more memoranda of understanding were signed separately between Indian and Malaysian companies at the business forum addressed by Mr. Badawi this afternoon. These included agreements in railways, information technology and biotechnology.

Pointing to the many similarities between India and Malaysia, he stressed, "...Like India, Malaysia is striving to sustain massive economic growth in order to ensure social justice. Like you, we want all our people to benefit from sustained economic growth. Like you, we don't want to leave behind a single citizen because of a lack of opportunity for education and employment. And like you, we want to make an impact internationally at this time of rapid globalisation."

Malaysia, he underlined, was keen to invest more to strengthen India's infrastructure and referred to the statement from New Delhi that half a trillion dollars' worth investment would be required in the next few years.

According to him, "partnership" was the operative word in this interdependent world. "Malaysia and India are not only partners in ensuring progress for our respective societies as two of the biggest economies of the developing world, it is also incumbent on us to fashion partnerships with other countries that can use our joint expertise for their own do-

trade agreement

domestic economic and social advancement."

"For example, construction companies from both countries can form joint ventures to explore opportunities together not only in India and Malaysia, but also in other countries in ASEAN, the Middle East [West Asia], Central Asia, East Asia and Northern, Central and Southern Africa."

Investment destination

In a message that Malaysia was a sound investment destination for Indian companies, Mr. Badawi said the country honoured its contracts — that means foreign capital was safe, repatriation was guaranteed and no one needed to have doubts about the integrity of the Malaysian financial system.

Pointing out that much more needed to be done on the trade front, he said, "I cannot emphasise the role Malaysia can play as a gateway to ASEAN, which has emerged as a dynamic and competitive region with a combined GDP of \$686 billion in 2003, with a population of more than 540 million, with high literacy rates, and an expanding industrial sector...."

21 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

Myanmar readies for flushout

Build-up on eastern front

PROBIR PRAMANIK

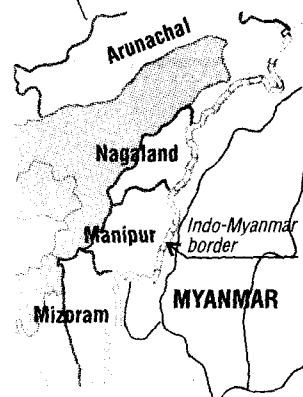
Tamulpur (Nalbari), Dec. 10: A year after Bhutan launched Operation All Clear to flush out Northeast militant groups based on its soil, Myanmar has got cracking as well.

Lt Gen. Anup Singh Jamwal, general-officer-commanding of the army's 4 Corps, today said Myanmar strongman Senior Gen. Than Shwe had begun massing troops to flush out Northeast militant groups, including the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) and the United Liberation Front of Asom.

"Operations against Northeast rebels seem imminent in Myanmar. We have concrete reports that the Myanmar authorities have started deploying troops along the border and is ready for a crackdown," Lt Gen. Jamwal told **The Telegraph** after inaugurating the Barkhopa high school building constructed by the army.

Gen. Than Shwe had expressed his intent to flush out the rebels during a five-day visit to India in late October. The visit, the first by a head of government of Yangon in 24 years, had come weeks after multiple blasts rocked Nagaland and Assam on October 2.

Lt Gen. Jamwal — head of the operations group of the



three-tiered Unified Command structure — today rubbished reports that the Myanmar Army had already begun driving out the rebels. The 4 Corps is in charge of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

The Northeast shares a 2,326-km border with Myanmar, of which 1,126 km is in Arunachal Pradesh. The remainder lies in Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram.

Besides the NSCN-K and the Ulfa, other outfits that have bases in Myanmar are the United National Liberation Front, Revolutionary People's Front and the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak, all from Manipur.

Most rebel camps are located deep inside the jungles in Myanmar's Sagaing division. NSCN-K commander S.S. Khaplang is also based in the coun-

cil headquarters in Sagaing.

The Indian Army is in the midst of full-fledged operations in Manipur's Sajik Tampak Valley, which borders Myanmar and is a well-known base of militant groups.

Lt Gen. Jamwal said the Indian Army was "ready" for joint operations with the Myanmar Army. "We are in a better position this time to intercept fleeing rebels," he said, conceding Operation All Clear, launched by the Royal Bhutan Army last December, had not wiped out the Ulfa and National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB).

The Bhutan operation had destroyed the bases of the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), Ulfa and the NDFB, but most of the rebels had managed to escape.

The army official said tough times were in store for the Ulfa as the Indian Army had launched a full-scale operation in Arunachal where rebels were trying to sneak in from Myanmar.

"We have also deployed troops along the entire border with Myanmar to intercept the rebels," Lt Gen. Jamwal said. **The Telegraph** had today reported that Ulfa rebels were shifting base from Myanmar in anticipation of a crackdown by the junta and trying to set up camps in Arunachal.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2004

Handwritten: India - ASEAN + 4?

TOWARDS ASEAN + 4?

Handwritten: HD-10 1/12

INDIA'S LOOK EAST policy, which was initiated in 1991, is all about making up for time and opportunity lost. The signing of the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity at the recent summit in Vientiane marks the culmination of strenuous efforts to win a position of significance and advantage in a dynamic growth region. The East of course is much more than the Association of Southeast Asian Nations with its 10 member countries. ASEAN, established in 1967, might have expanded and deepened its activities more effectively than any other regional association, the European Union excepted. But China, the world's biggest economic success story of the past quarter century; Japan, the world's second largest economy, which has begun to re-power itself after a painfully prolonged recession; and the Republic of Korea, a robust competitor by any standards, are counterweights as well as partners that help view ASEAN in perspective. They make up a much-envied ASEAN + 3 process into which India has been trying to ease itself. Can it conceivably become ASEAN + 4?

This is more or less the vision of an Asian Economic Community that has been around for some time. In his inaugural address to the Third India-ASEAN Business Summit in New Delhi in October, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh proposed a new term of art for such a community: the "arc of advantage." Containing half the world's population and several high growth economies, it would "release enormous energies" across an integrated market "spanning the distance from the Himalayas to the Pacific Ocean...[and] linked by efficient road, rail, air and shipping services." Across the arc there would be an unprecedented movement of "people, capital, ideas, and creativity." The total income of the community would rival the European Union's; in terms of trade it would be bigger than the North American Free Trade

Agreement (comprising the United States, Canada, and Mexico); its combined foreign exchange reserves would be greater than those of the EU and NAFTA combined. And so on. But that's in the future — distant or foreseeable, no one knows at this point.

Meanwhile, there is the ASEAN-India partnership document, a hard-worked and solid accomplishment on both sides. The ASEAN region has a population approximating 500 million, a combined GDP of \$737 billion, and a total trade of \$720 billion. With its expanded membership that includes the three Indochinese countries, Myanmar, and Brunei, the regional association can even boast of political diversity and plural voices on regional and international issues of significance. India, which became a sectoral dialogue partner in 1992, a full dialogue partner in 1995, a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum in 1996, and a summit level partner in 2002, is now looking forward to a new level and quality of relationship that will enable it to leverage its economic, political and civilisational advantages in Southeast Asia. The partnership will be developed in three domains — political and security cooperation, economic cooperation, and social and cultural cooperation — that mirror the ASEAN Vision 2020. The central challenge for India at this stage is to complete the negotiations for the Free Trade Area in goods, services, and investment envisaged in the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation between India and ASEAN signed in Bali in October 2003. According to a statement made by the ASEAN Secretary-General, Ong Keng Yong, in Vientiane, "the FTA discussion with India is progressing albeit slower than what we are hoping for." The Early Harvest Programme, involving immediate tariff concessions, will offer a taste of what lies ahead. The tone of India's 'arc of advantage' policy will be set by how smoothly the country can put in place the FTA with ASEAN.

India, ASEAN to jointly fight terrorism

VIENTIANE, NOV. 30. Taking a giant step forward in strategic ties, India and the 10 ASEAN countries today signed a historic partnership pact for peace, progress and shared prosperity, vowed to jointly fight international terrorism and decided to promote and facilitate cross-flows of foreign direct investment.

The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, who inked the 'ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity' pact with leaders of ASEAN countries at their 3rd annual summit here, said that India and the regional grouping must work together for a future of shared prosperity if the 21st century was to be the Asian century.

Dr. Singh quoted Jawaharlal Nehru's speech at the Asian Relations Conference in 1947 that Asian leaders must work jointly to draft a new future.

Action plan

The agreement outlines a multi-pronged action plan for

boosting trade, investment, tourism, culture, sports and people-to-people contacts. The leaders agreed to intensify efforts to combat international terrorism and other transnational crimes such as drug trafficking, arms smuggling, human trafficking, particularly of women and children, sea piracy and money laundering.

The powerful ASEAN grouping comprises Laos, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Brunei. India, along with China and other key countries, are dialogue partners of the grouping.

They agreed to foster closer cooperation in reforming and democratising the United Nations and institutions under it by making them "more reflective of the contemporary realities." The four-page partnership accord and the nine-page action plan envisages their cooperation in multilateral fora, particularly the World Trade Organisation and in ad-

ressing common challenges of economic, food, human and energy security.

Anti-terror operations

The ASEAN nations also sought India's help for training their forces in dealing with anti-terrorism operations.

Despite essentially being a trade promotion document, there is a strong anti-terror leaning to the agreement. So far, the security relationship with ASEAN has not included active training and joint exercises with an ASEAN grouping of anti-terror operatives, though at bilateral levels India has joint working groups on counter-terrorism with many members.

India and ASEAN have pledged to "build institutional linkages for intelligence and information sharing, exchange of information and cooperation in legal and enforcement matters." The agreement also seeks to "explore developing anti-terrorism cooperation." — PTI, ANI

Manmohan to look into Paswan-Lalu spat

NEW DELHI, NOV. 30. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, tonight indicated he would look into the public spat between the Union Cabinet Ministers, Ram Vilas Paswan and Lalu Prasad.

"I have just arrived from abroad. I have seen some re-

ports in papers. Let me find out what statements have been made," Dr. Singh told reporters on his arrival from Laos tonight.

On the BJP's plan to target the UPA Government in the coming Parliament session

over various issues, Dr. Singh said, "we are prepared for everything."

The Government is ready to discuss any matter the Opposition wants to raise in Parliament. We will extend full cooperation to them." — PTI

01 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

EAST WIND P-18

India's engagement with the Association of South-east Asian Nations is finally coming of age. The "ASEAN-India partnership for peace, progress and shared prosperity" agreement, signed by the prime minister, Mr Manmohan Singh, and leaders of ASEAN countries at Vientiane, should provide a powerful new thrust to the relationship. The partnership agreement, signed during the third annual ASEAN-India summit, visualizes a long-term basis to the relationship and provides a coherent direction to it. It contains a multi-track action plan for boosting trade, investment, tourism, culture, sports and people-to-people contacts between India and the region. It is now critical to continue building on this relationship, which is of obvious vital national importance. The partnership agreement also provides for intensifying joint India-ASEAN efforts to combat international terrorism, drug-trafficking, arms-smuggling, human trafficking, particularly of women and children, sea piracy and money-laundering. India and ASEAN countries have also agreed to foster closer cooperation in reforming and democratizing the United Nations and institutions under it by making them "more reflective of the contemporary realities".

It has now become obvious that there are several reasons for India to pursue a coherent and sustained policy for the region. Most important, ASEAN countries offer tremendous economic opportunities to India and Indian investors. India needs to continue to expand its trade with a large number of ASEAN countries. Even with countries like Singapore and Malaysia, with which India has traditionally strong economic relations, there is space for further expansion of trade in goods and services.

India has defined its region of strategic importance as extending from the Malacca Straits to the Persian Gulf. Building a strong security relationship with ASEAN countries is thus of immense importance. Moreover, many of the ASEAN countries face similar challenges from terrorism and secessionism as faced by India. A collaborative strategy can yield results where unilateral policies might fail. The dividend from collaboration is already evident in India's recent security cooperation with Myanmar, an ASEAN member country. Furthermore, India has strong cultural bonds with many of the ASEAN countries, which can be the basis for further expansion of ties. Simultaneously, there is a significant Indian minority in many of the ASEAN countries. This diaspora can provide a strong basis for vibrant relationships. Finally, India should engage with ASEAN countries, bilaterally and multilaterally, to ensure that a rising China does not jeopardize its economic and strategic interests. Unfortunately, India's policies towards southeast Asia have often fluctuated between activism and neglect. The need now is for continued engagement at all levels as the fundamental basis of India's "Look East" policy.

01 DEC 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

Bloc Leaders Put Up United Front Against Terror

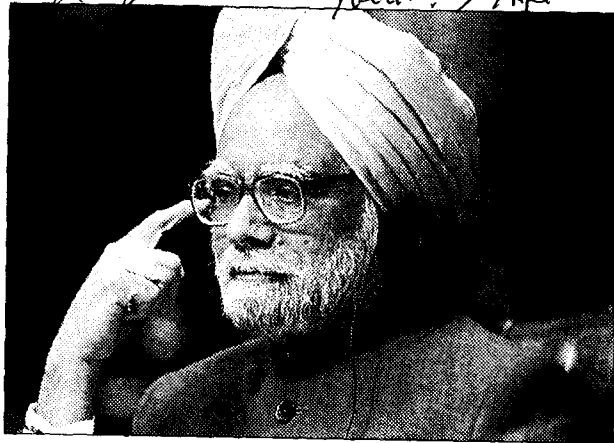
India, Asean sign pact on peace, prosperity

Arvind Padmanabhan

VIENTIANE (Laos) 30 NOVEMBER

INDIA and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) on Tuesday signed a landmark pact on "peace, progress and shared prosperity" with a call for collective action to fight global terrorism and expand economic ties. New Delhi also pledged \$2.5 million in support for the Asean Fund that addresses the needs of project financing in Asia.

The partnership agreement was signed here by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the heads of state and government of the grouping at the third India-Asean Summit. India is a dialogue partner in the 10-member Asean. The nine-page document envisages intensive cooperation in political and security issues, be-



THOUGHT PROCESS: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the Asean-India summit in Vientiane on Tuesday. — AP

sides economic, science and technology, health and cultural fields. The pact was the outcome of

discussions between the Indian and Asean governments as well as other stakeholders. — IANS

30 NOV 2004 THE HINDU

India's role in a changing ASEAN

By N. Ram

VIENTIANE, NOV. 29. If India's engagement with the Association of South-East Asian Nations has expanded and deepened a great deal over the past 12 years, this is quite modest in comparison with the powerful relationship China has forged with the regional grouping.

The level of two-way trade between ASEAN and its three East Asian partners, Japan, China and South Korea, can be taken as rough indicators of the level of economic partnership achieved. For ASEAN and the three taken together, two-way trade was close to \$196 billion in 2004. Naturally, the Japanese economy — despite the prolonged recession — has the lion's share in this. But China's economic partnership with ASEAN is racing ahead. Two-way trade between ASEAN and China is now close to \$50 billion and the target for 2005 is \$100 billion.

If ASEAN and the partner-

ships and interactions it has developed with conspicuous success are all about ways and means to accelerate economic development, some political subtexts have come on the agenda in recent years. With the induction of two socialist countries, Vietnam (1995) and Laos (1997), a former socialist country still recovering from the ravages of Pol Potism, Cambodia (1999), and Myanmar (1997), political diversity has increased within the regional grouping. The two most politically significant changes ASEAN has experienced over the last few years are (a) the arrival of a problematical security agenda and set of political concerns that came with 9/11, and (b) the growing weight of China and all it stands for in the ASEAN scheme of things.

Interestingly, China was the first dialogue partner to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia; this happened at the 2003 ASEAN summit at Bali

where a Strategic Partnership between the world's most populous country and the regional association was announced. By contrast, Japan's political influence in this region seems to be waning.

India's advantage

As for the new ASEAN, India has the advantage of having traditionally strong relations with the Indochinese countries — civilisationally, politically, and, more recently, through development cooperation and assistance. Of the three Laos, which is India's country coordinator in ASEAN, is the smallest and the most in need of economic assistance. With a population of 5.7 million, close to half of whom live in poverty, it has set itself the target of coming out of the "Least Developed Country" category by 2020. Along with Vietnam, it has firmly supported India's candidature for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. Political

India is S.B. Asian, where feelings towards India are warm and spontaneously friendly.

Civilisational bond

India has made a good start by including a speciality neurological hospital, funding for 150 km of power transmission lines, an IT Centre, an entrepreneurship centre in its agenda of development cooperation. But, as the top Lao leaders reminded Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in their meetings with him in Vientiane, the really big assistance could come in the field of agriculture, where India, its research institutions and its business community, could contribute a great deal. India would also do well to go ahead and commit itself to the restoration of the UNESCO World Heritage site of Wat Phu in southern Laos, which goes back to the 5th century A.D. and is a marvellous reminder of the civilisational bond between India and Southeast Asia.

Security, Economic Issues May Dominate Summit

PM set to ink partnership document with Asean



GREET EXPECTATIONS: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh being presented a bouquet on his arrival at Vientiane airport in Laos on Sunday. — PTI

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 28 NOVEMBER

SETTING the tone for a durable Indo-Asean relationship, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Tuesday will be inking a "partnership document" with the influential block that will aim to combat terrorism, while giving a fillip to trade and business opportunities. Dr Singh, who reached the Laos capital Vientiane on Sunday to participate in the third Indo-Asean summit, will also be interacting, for the first time, with leaders of the region, including the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and his Japanese counterpart Junichiro Koizumi.

Even though the visit invariably would have a sharp economic tilt to it, New Delhi's efforts would be to try and use the opportunity to broaden its relationship as much as possible. The linkage of security issues to business will be stressed upon by In-

dia. With a number of the Asean nations themselves victims of terrorism, the expectation is that New Delhi's concerns will be shared. At the Bali summit last year, the two sides had signed a declaration on cooperation in combating international terrorism and other trans-national crimes. The partnership pact envisages a collective vision for political, economic, science and technology, health, culture and other key areas.

"This landmark document incorporates a plan of action for even more intensive cooperation on political and security issues, as well as in the economic, social and cultural fields," external affairs minister K. Natwar Singh said in a statement on Sunday. Mr Singh had earlier discussed the draft document at the meeting of foreign ministers. "It is indeed a matter of gratification that a number of new dimensions, such as cooperation in remote sensing, space technology and information technology have been added to our

two millennia old cultural, religious and civilisational links," he said. The partnership document is to be formally adopted in the Indo-Asean business council meeting of the summit.

Dr Singh's contacts with Asean leaders is also expected to set the tone for enhanced bilateral engagements with the particular countries. The meeting with Chinese Premier Mr Jiabao, in particular, is being seen as significant, coming in the backdrop of buoyancy in Sino-Indian ties. The meeting will be the first highest level interaction between the two countries since the UPA government assumed power in May this year.

The Chinese vice foreign minister for Asian affairs, Wu Dawei, had told reporters last week that China was very positive about such a high-level meeting with India. Mr Jiabao has already accepted Dr Singh's invitation to visit India early next year.

India, Asean to sign landmark pact

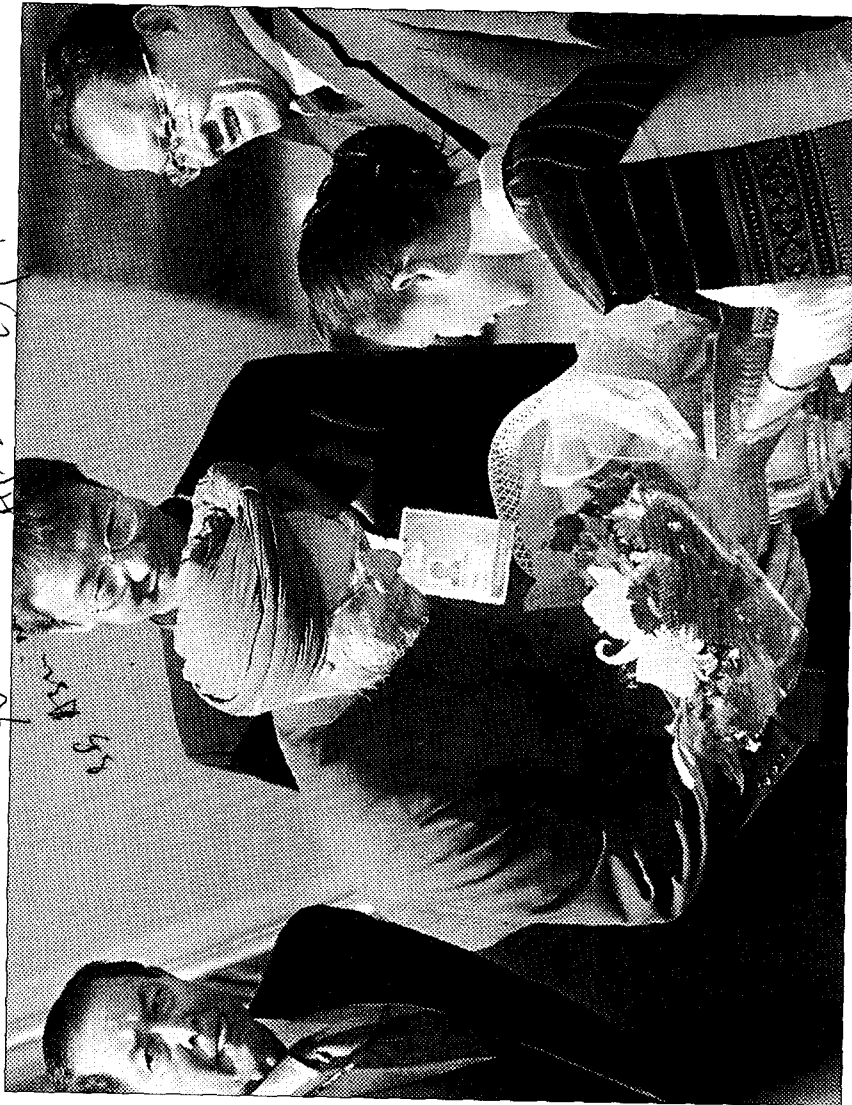
HTC & Agencies
Vientiane, November 28

PRIME MINISTER Manmohan Singh today said a long-term partnership agreement with Asean countries would provide a new dimension to India's relations with the grouping. Final touches are being given to the landmark pact, which is expected to be signed here at the third India-Asean summit beginning tomorrow.

The Prime Minister, who arrived here today with a high-level delegation to attend the summit, said: "This inclusive approach should give added momentum to the partnership between India and Asean nations." The agreement, which sets out the direction of India's ties with the countries of the region in various spheres for the next decade, was discussed at a meeting of foreign ministers and the pact is all set to be signed on Tuesday.

In a statement, External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh said, "This landmark document incorporates a plan of action for even more intensive cooperation on political and security issues as well as in the economic, social and cultural fields. It is indeed a matter of gratification that a number of new dimensions, such as cooperation in remote-sensing, space technology and information technology have been added to our two millennia-old cultural, religious and civilisational links."

The Prime Minister's visit to the summit is also set to boost India-Asean trade from the current \$13 billion to \$30 billion by 2007. Singh, who arrived here to a warm ceremonial welcome,



LOOKING EAST Prime Minister Manmohan Singh arrives at Vientiane airport in Laos on Sunday.

drove straight from Wattay international airport to Dong Pasak Villa, where he would be staying for three days.

The Prime Minister, who held bilateral meetings with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and his Laos and Vietnamese counterparts, Bounghang Vorachith and Phan Van

Khai, respectively, will hold talks with his Japanese and Singaporean counterparts, Junichiro Koizumi and H. Loong, tomorrow, besides calling on Laos President Khamtay Siphandone. His is also expected to hold a maiden meeting with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao who is scheduled to visit India early next year.

In his departure statement in Delhi, the Prime Minister said India-Asean partnership was steadily expanding and deepening. "I look forward to meeting and exchanging views with my counterparts in the Asean countries on both regional and international, political and economic issues, and on taking forward our

Indonesia seeks help to curb terrorism

INDONESIA ON Sunday sought India's cooperation in countering terrorism and joint patrolling in the seas. Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, during his talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, here to attend the India-Asean summit, sought cooperation in countering terrorism from across the borders.

Singh said that, stretching from Afghanistan to the Philippines, this was a common predicament and what was needed was a bilateral and multilateral arrangement to collective stand against the menace, according to National security Adviser J.N. Dixit. The Indonesian leader also sought defence cooperation from India and emphasised maritime security and joint patrolling in the seas, besides suggesting an institutional arrangement.

PTI, Vientiane

partnership in diverse areas."

Singh, who is accompanied by some top officials, including National Security Adviser J.N. Dixit, Commerce Secretary S.N. Menon and Secretary (east) in External Affairs Ministry Rajiv Sikri, was received at the airport by Laos Tourism Minister Somphong Mongkholvilay.

লক্ষ্য দক্ষিণ-পূর্বের বাজার দখল

সমৃদ্ধি এনে ঠেকানো

Quarter - S & Asian

সম্ভব নাশকতাও

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • ভিয়েনতিয়েন
(লাওস)

২৮ নভেম্বর: দেরিতে হলেও গা
ঝাড়া দিয়ে উঠেছে ভারত। প্রধানমন্ত্রী
মনমোহন সিংহের চোখের সামনে
এখন এক বিস্তৃত বাজার। 'আসিয়ান'
শীর্ষ সম্মেলনে যোগ দেওয়ার লক্ষ্য
আপাতত তাই একটাই। চিন-সিঙ্গাপুর
যে ভাবে দ্রুত দখল করছে বিশ্ববাজার,
সে ভাবেই এই পূর্বাঞ্চলে ভারতও হয়ে
উঠতে পারে এক অপ্রতিরোধ্য শক্তি।
আর এ কাজে মনমোহন সফল হলে
সবার আগে হাসি ফুটবে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী
বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যের মুখেই। পূর্বাঞ্চলের
'গেটওয়ে' কলকাতায় গড়ে উঠবে
আরও সড়ক, সেতু আর তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি।
পশ্চিমবঙ্গে শিল্পে বিনিয়োগ বাড়বে বই
কমবে না।

দিল্লি থেকে লাওস আসার পথে
বিমানে এই কথাটাই বলেছেন
মনমোহন। তাঁর বাণিজ্য সচিব এস এন
মেননও বলেছেন, ২০০৫ সালের মধ্যে
আসিয়ান দেশগুলির সঙ্গে আমরা
১৫০০ কোটি ডলারের ব্যবসা করব।
আর ২০০৭ সালে এটা দ্বিগুণ হবে।
একই সঙ্গে মনমোহন জানান, ২০০২-
০৩ সালে এই বাণিজ্যের আর্থিক মূল্য
ছিল মাত্র ৯৭৮ কোটি ডলার।

লাওসে পৌঁছেই তাই সক্রিয় হয়ে
উঠেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। আসিয়ান শীর্ষ
বৈঠকটি হবে মঙ্গলবার কিন্তু আজ
থেকেই শুরু হয়ে গিয়েছে দ্বিপাক্ষিক
বৈঠক। ইন্দোনেশিয়ার প্রেসিডেন্ট
সুসিলো বামবাং ইউসোওয়ানোর সঙ্গে
আসতে না আসতেই বৈঠক করেছেন
ভিলা কমপ্লেক্সের ক্লাব হাউসে।
লাওস ও ভিয়েনতিয়েনের প্রধানমন্ত্রীদের
সঙ্গেও হল বৈঠক। কাল সকালে
লাওসের প্রেসিডেন্টের সঙ্গে দেখা
করতে যাবেন মনমোহন। আর বিকালে
জাপান ও সিঙ্গাপুরের প্রধানমন্ত্রীদের
সঙ্গে তাঁর মোলাকাত হবে। মঙ্গলবার
সকালে চিনের প্রধানমন্ত্রী ওয়েন
জিয়াবাওয়ের সঙ্গে প্রাতঃরাশ। এর
আগে ব্যাঙ্ককে বিমস্টেকের সম্মেলনে

গিয়েও দেখা গিয়েছিল, প্রধানমন্ত্রী 'লুক
ইস্ট পলিসি'কে কতখানি গুরুত্ব
দিচ্ছেন। বিমস্টেকের সদস্য
বাংলাদেশও, তবে আসিয়ানে তারা
নেই। আর পাকিস্তান তো এই দু'টি
আঞ্চলিক মঞ্চের কোনওটাতেই নেই।

আসিয়ান মঞ্চকে ব্যবহার করে
ভারত এই এলাকায় এক অপ্রতিরোধ্য
শক্তি হয়ে উঠতে চায়। তবে শুধু

এলাকা এখন মাদক ও অস্ত্র
চোরচালানের স্বর্গরাজ্য। সি আই এ'র
প্রকাশিত রিপোর্ট থেকেই জানা যাচ্ছে,
বেআইনি আফিমের উৎপাদনে
মায়ানমার পৃথিবীতে দ্বিতীয় বৃহত্তম
রাষ্ট্র। প্রথম অবশ্য আজও
আফগানিস্তান। লাওসে দু'দিন আগেই
বিস্ফোরণ ঘটিয়েছে কিছু উপজাতি
জঙ্গি। জে এন দীক্ষিত মনে করেন,



ভিয়েনতিয়েন বিমানবন্দরে মনমোহনকে অভ্যর্থনা। রবিবার। - পি টি আই

অর্থনীতিই নয়, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর জাতীয়
নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা জে এন দীক্ষিত
মনে করেন, আসিয়ান দেশগুলির সঙ্গে
বাণিজ্যিক সাফল্য দেশের নিরাপত্তার
ক্ষেত্রও উপকারে লাগতে পারে।
উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের বিচ্ছিন্নতাবাদী
কার্যকলাপ নিয়ে যারপরনাই উদ্দিগ্ন
ভারত। কাজটি এখন কুকুরের ল্যাজ
সোজা করার মতোই দুরূহ। আলোচনা
শুরু করতে গেলেই ফের শুরু হয়ে যায়
বিস্ফোরণ ও অন্যান্য নাশকতামূলক
কাজকর্ম। এই এলাকায় সন্ত্রাস যত
বাড়ছে ততই জঙ্গিগণের সংখ্যাও
বাড়ছে। বাংলাদেশ-মায়ানমার-ভূটানে।
তাইল্যান্ড-মায়ানমার-লাওস এ সব

ভারত যদি এই এলাকার আর্থিক
চালচিহ্নটাই বদলে দিতে পারে তা হলে
এই সব দেশের পাশাপাশি ভারতের
উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের সমস্যাও অনেক
কমে যাবে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীও মনে করেন,
ডান্ডা দিয়ে জঙ্গিদের ঠান্ডা করা যায় না,
বিকল্প অর্থনৈতিক ব্যবস্থার মাধ্যমেই
পাওয়া যেতে পারে এ সমস্যার
দীর্ঘমেয়াদি সমাধান। জীবিকার
অভাবেই এ সব এলাকার অধিকাংশ
বেকার যুবক জঙ্গি হয়ে ওঠেন। সুতরাং
গোড়াতেই যে গলদ রয়েছে তা
শোধরাতে চান মনমোহন। আর এ
কাজে ভারত এ বার বাজিমাৎ করে
এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

29 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Poverty a thing of the past: PM

SNS & PTI

VIENTIANE (Laos), Nov. 28. — Calling India as one of the fastest growing economies, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today said a long-term partnership agreement with Asean countries would provide a new dimension to its relations with the powerful ten-nation grouping.

"A new India is on the horizon" and the future "lies in working together," Dr Singh said as he arrived here on a three-day visit to Laos to attend the 3rd India-Asean Summit during which a partnership agreement will be signed to give a collective vision of New Delhi and South-east Asia in political, economic, science and technology, health,

culture and other key spheres.

Earlier, before leaving for Laos, the Prime Minister said in New Delhi that the document was an outcome of discussions between the governments. It will provide a new dimension to India's relations with Asean, the Prime Minister said, adding India attached high priority to strengthening and expanding the scope of its mutually beneficial relations with "our neighbours in the east with whom we have profound civilisational ties".

The Prime Minister, who is leading a high-level delegation, said: "This inclusive approach should give added momentum to this partnership between India and Asean".

The partnership agreement, which sets out the direction of India's ties

with the countries of the region in various spheres for the next decade, was discussed at the meeting of the foreign ministers and the pact is all set to be signed on Tuesday.

At a reception hosted by Indian Ambassador Mr Twesang Topden here, the Prime Minister said India was on the threshold of entering a new era where poverty and disease would be "thing of the past". During bilateral meetings, the Prime Minister had with Asean leaders, Indonesia sought India's cooperation in countering terrorism and joint patrolling in the seas.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, during talks with Dr Singh, sought cooperation in countering terrorism from across the borders.

More reports on page 9

29 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

কমিউনিস্ট লাওসে মেকং দেখে উচ্ছ্বসিত মনমোহন

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • ভিয়েনতিয়েন
(লাওস)

২৮ নভেম্বর: সন্ধ্যায় মেকং নদীর দিকে তাকিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ বলেই ফেললেন, 'বাং কী অপূর্ব!' সোনছান প্যালেন্স হোটেলের আয়োজিত সভায় অনাবাসী ভারতীয়দের সঙ্গে কথা বলতে বলতে পনেরো তলার স্বাইলাউঞ্জের কাচের জানলা দিয়ে তিনি দেখতে পাচ্ছেন বহুতা মেকং। মনমোহনের সঙ্গে তাঁর স্ত্রী না-এলেও ছিলেন কন্যা ও জানাতা। প্রবল বাস্তবতার মধ্যেও সম্ভবত লাওসের এই মুহূর্তটুকুই তাঁর কাছে মহামূল্যবান। কোনও কিছুতেই খুব উচ্ছ্বসিত হয়ে পড়ার মানুষ নন মনমোহন। কিন্তু আজ সারা দিনে তিন তিনটে দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকের শেষে ক্রান্ত প্রধানমন্ত্রী মেকং-এর সৌন্দর্যে চেপে রাখতে পারলেন না তাঁর উচ্ছ্বাস।

যে দু'টি বুলেটগ্রফ বি এম ডবলিউ

গাড়ি প্রধানমন্ত্রী দিল্লিতে বাবহার করেন, নিরাপত্তার কারণেই সেগুলিকে আগাম উড়িয়ে আনা হয়েছে এখানে। এসপিজি প্রধান বি ভি ওয়ানচু আগেই চলে এসেছিলেন এ দেশে। দোং পাসাক ভিনা নামে যে হোটেলটিতে মনমোহন আছেন, সেটির চার দিক 'সিল' করে দেওয়া হয়েছে। এ শহরের পথে পথে ঘুরতে ঘুরতে বিস্মিত হয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। লোকের বলে, গরিব দেশ। অথচ মানুষ গোটা দেশটাকে ছবির মতো করে রেখেছে। যত্নে লালিত প্রতিটি বাড়ি, দফতর, রাস্তাঘাট, বিমানবন্দর।

ঘুরতে ঘুরতে মনে হচ্ছে, মণিপুর বা অরুণাচল প্রদেশের মতো। উত্তর-পূর্বের মানুস নন মনমোহন। কিন্তু আজ পৌঁছেছি। মাত্র পঞ্চাশ লক্ষ মানুষের বাস লাওসে। ভারতীয় পরিবার সবসাকুলো একশো! এর মধ্যে তামিলদের সংখ্যাই বেশি।

হোট্ট এই দেশে চিনের প্রভাব

অসীম। চিনের প্রধানমন্ত্রী এ এসছেন আসিয়ান শীর্ষ সম্মেলনে যোগ দিতে। কিন্তু এমন এক হোট্ট রাষ্ট্রে এত বড় সম্মেলন এই প্রথম। সেই কারণেই স্থানীয় কমিউনিস্ট সরকার মশা মারতে কামান দেগেছে।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহকে



স্বাগত জানাতে স্থানীয় মেয়েরা এসেছেন শাড়ি পরে। স্থানীয় প্রশাসনের এক কর্তব্যাক্তি বললেন, দেশের প্রধানমন্ত্রী সমস্ত মেয়েরদের বলেছেন, এই ক দিন জিনস বা স্কাট না-পারতে। ঐতিহ্য মেনে শাড়ি বা স্থানীয় পোশাক

পরতে হবে।

এখানেই শেষ নয়, এই তিন দিনের জন্য বিদেশ থেকে পর্যটকদের আসা নিষিদ্ধ। কেননা, আসিয়ানের জন্য নানা দেশ থেকে এসেছেন শ'য়ে শ'য়ে প্রতিনিধি। এত হোটেল তো নেই এ দেশে। অগত্যা কী করা!

হোট্ট এই লাওস দেশটি একলা ছিল কবাসিদের উপনিবেশ। সে তো বহু প্রাচীন ইতিহাস। হালে ১৯৭৫ সালে ভিয়েনামের যুদ্ধে মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র পরাস্ত হওয়ার পরেই লাও পিপলস রেভলিউশনারি পার্টি ক্ষমতার আসে। গঠিত হয় লাও-পিপলস ডেমোক্রেটিক রিপাবলিক।

কিন্তু এ দেশে হিন্দু ও বৌদ্ধ ধর্ম দুয়েরই প্রভাব অপরিণীম। একদলীয় প্রশাসন হওয়া সত্ত্বেও লাওস কিন্তু কখনওই সাবেকি সোভিয়েত বা চিনের মতো নাস্তিক রাষ্ট্র হয়নি। দেশটা হোট্ট হলে কী হবে, প্যাগোডার সংখ্যাও নেহাৎ কম নয়।

লাওসের প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে কথা বলার সময় মনমোহন তাই জানাতে ভোলেননি, আমাদের দু'দেশে সংস্কৃতির নৈকট্য অনেক দিনের। স্কাট অশোকের সময় থেকে ভারতের সঙ্গে এ দেশের সম্পর্ক গেঁথে দিয়েছিল বৌদ্ধধর্ম। লাও দেশে রামায়ণের জনপ্রিয়তা, ঘরে ঘরে শিবপূজার চর্চা, দেখেও বোঝা যায় এই ছোট্ট দেশে হিন্দু ধর্মের প্রভাবও কিছু কম নয়।

মেকং নদীর তীরে মানুষের বাস দশ হাজার বছর ধরে। চিনে বাঁধ দেওয়ায় এই নদীতে স্রোত কমে গিয়েছে, ঠিক যেমনটি হয়েছে আমাদের যমুনায়। চিনের ছুছয়য় বড় হয়ে ওঠা এই দেশে এসে মনমোহন কৃটনীতিতেও দিয়েছেন সুস্থ চাল। হাসপাতাল থেকে স্কুল, নানা সাহায্যের প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। বন্ধুত্বের এই অঙ্গীকারে প্রথম দিনেই তিনি বেঁধে ফেলেছেন লাওসের পঞ্চাশ লক্ষ মানুষকে।

Indo-Asean landmark pact

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

VIENTIANE (Laos), Nov. 27. — India and Asean today adopted a landmark partnership agreement which envisages, among other things, a vision to catalyse trade between the two sides to \$30 billion by 2007. The current trade between India and Asean stands at \$13 billion.

The India-Asean Partnership Agreement was adopted at a meeting of foreign ministers from the Asean grouping and attended by external affairs minister Mr K Natwar Singh. The agreement will be formally signed by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, who arrives here tomorrow to attend the India-Asean summit held on the sidelines of the 10th Asean summit currently underway here.

Mr Singh had wide-ranging talks with his Asean counterparts on issues like closer security coopera-



Mr Natwar Singh at the 10th Asean ministerial meeting in Vientiane on Saturday. — AFP

tion, ways to tackle transnational terrorism, science and technology, bio-technology, space and tele-

medicines, said an official.

Mr Singh said the foreign ministers will review the collaborative ventures undertaken by India and the Association of South-east Asian Nations since their last Summit in Bali in October 2003.

The external affairs minister will also inaugurate the Laos India Entrepreneurship Development Centre. Three more such centres would be set up in the capitals of Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam by early next year.

India has been taking giant strides to further cement the growing ties with its East Asian neighbours in its active "Look East Policy". To prove the close proximity of India to the Asean region, a car rally was flagged off from Guwahati recently.

One of the Asean ministers referred to India as the "western wing of Asean" while referring to South Korea and Japan as its "eastern wing".

■ Another report on page 11

28 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

Manmohan May Meet Chinese Premier On Tuesday

PM has a packed schedule at ASEAN

Arvind Padmanabhan

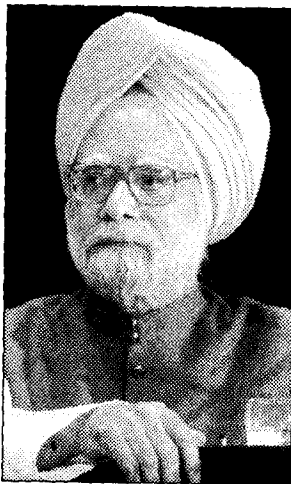
VIENTIANE (LAOS) 27 NOVEMBER

A PACKED schedule awaits Prime Minister Manmohan Singh when he arrives here on Sunday for the 3rd summit between India and ASEAN, including several bilateral engagements.

Even as finer details of Singh's itinerary are being worked out, officials here said the Prime Minister was expected to meet Chinese Premier Wen Jia Bao on Tuesday. This will be their first meeting since Manmohan Singh took office in May.

The meeting between the two leaders comes after a recent visit by India's National Security Advisor J N Dixit to Beijing. External affairs minister K Natwar Singh and Dixit are also expected to take part in the India-China bilateral discussions.

"The Prime Minister and I look forward to the next few days of constructive discussions with our friends and neighbours in this strategically important region," Natwar Singh, who arrived here on Friday, said. He declined to go into specifics.



MANMOHAN: LOOKING EAST

Besides China, Manmohan Singh is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Bounnhang Vorachit of Laos, the host for the summit, besides calling on Laos' President Khamtay Siphandone at the presidential palace.

Other bilateral engagements include meetings with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore, Vietnamese Premier Phan Van Khai and Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Officials said the meeting between Manmohan Singh and Wen assumes significance in the context of the Chinese premier's visit to India expected early next year and the fourth round of border talks that concluded in Beijing last week. After Dixit's meeting in Beijing, during which he also met with Wen, both sides had signalled that the border issue, the main roadblock in Sino-Indian ties, were progressing smoothly.

It was for this reason that the Indian side had suggested the Sino-India model for peace talks with Pakistan when Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz visited New Delhi earlier this week. Other bilateral matters coinciding with Manmohan Singh's visit here include the inauguration of India-Laos IT Centre.

Under the initiative, India will help Laos set up IT training laboratories, a national data centre, V-sat based network for 18 provinces, enact cyber security and related laws, and establish certification authorities.

India is also setting up a Laos-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre as part of Vientiane's contribution to the Initiative for ASEAN Integration. — IANS

ভুটানের পরে মায়ানমারে জঙ্গি-দমন অভিযানের প্রস্তুতি

অগ্নি রায় • নয়াদিল্লি

৩ নভেম্বর: ভুটানের পর এ বার মায়ানমার।

মায়ানমারের যে যে জায়গায় জঙ্গিশিবির রয়েছে, সে সব জায়গায় সে দেশের সঙ্গে সমন্বয়ের মাধ্যমে সেনা অভিযান শুরু করার চূড়ান্ত প্রস্তুতি নিচ্ছে নয়াদিল্লি। সম্প্রতি জঙ্গি ও অপরাধ দমন বিষয়ক একাধিক চুক্তিপত্রে স্বাক্ষর করার পর মায়ানমার সরকারের অন্যতম শীর্ষ নেতা থান শিউ-এর সঙ্গে বিষয়টি নিয়ে ভারত সরকারের কথাবার্তা হয়ে গিয়েছে। মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটিতেও এই নিয়ে সিদ্ধান্ত হয়েছে। ঘাঁটিগুলিকে কেন্দ্র করে তৈরি হয়েছে একটি মানচিত্রও। এই অভিযান কবে এবং কী ভাবে হবে, তা নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে কথাবার্তা চলছে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়, স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল ও বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহের সঙ্গে।

তবে সরকারি সূত্রে এ কথাও জানা গিয়েছে, এই অভিযান চালানো হবে একেবারে শেষ অস্ত্র হিসাবে। অভিযান শুরুর আগের মুহূর্ত পর্যন্ত আলোচনার মাধ্যমে শান্তি ফেরানোর জন্যও সমান্তরালভাবে চেষ্টা চালিয়ে যাওয়া হবে বলে স্থির হয়েছে। তবে সেই চেষ্টার অন্তিম সময়সীমা কবে পর্যন্ত, তা স্পষ্ট না করা হলেও তা যে 'অনন্তকাল' চলবে না, স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক সূত্রে সেই ব্যাপারেও স্পষ্ট ইঙ্গিত দেওয়া হয়েছে। সম্প্রতি অসমের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী তরুণ

গগৈ রাজধানীতে এসে প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে প্রস্তাব দিয়েছেন এন ডি এফ বি (বড়ো জঙ্গি সংগঠন) সঙ্গে অস্ত্রসমর্পন চুক্তি নিয়ে রাজ্যের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসা হোক। তিনি জানিয়েছেন, অসমের জ্ঞানপীঠ পুরস্কারপ্রাপ্ত লেখিকা ইন্দীরা গোস্বামীর মধ্যস্থতায় পাশাপাশি আলফা জঙ্গিদেরও আলোচনায় বসানোর চেষ্টা চালিয়ে যাওয়া হচ্ছে। অন্যদিকে নাগাল্যান্ডের এন এস সি এন (আই এম) গোষ্ঠীর সঙ্গেও শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া এগিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়ার প্রয়াসও অব্যাহত। তবে শেষ পর্যন্ত কথাবার্তার সমস্ত প্রয়াস যদি ব্যর্থ হয় তবে 'ছড়ি' ব্যবহার করতে দ্বিধা করা হবে না বলেই স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক সূত্রের খবর। আজ পুলিশের ডি জি স্মেলনে কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের জঙ্গি সমস্যা নিরসনের দাওয়াই হিসাবে বলেছেন, বিভিন্ন সামাজিক প্রয়াসের পাশাপাশি "কড়া জঙ্গি-দমন ব্যবস্থা নিতে হবে সমস্যার চূড়ান্ত সমাধানের জন্য।"

২০০৩ সালে ভুটানের সেনা অভিযানের কথা উল্লেখ করে তিনি বলেছেন, "ভুটানের সেনাবাহিনী আলফা এবং এন ডি এফ বি জঙ্গিদের যে ভাবে মেরে তাড়িয়েছিল, তা উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের সন্ত্রাসদমনে ইতিবাচক প্রভাব ফেলেছে। অসম ও নাগাল্যান্ডের সাম্প্রতিক হিংসা এই সংগঠনগুলির প্রতি সাধারণ মানুষের সমর্থনে ক্ষয় ধরিয়েছে।"

তবে এন ডি এফ বি-র অস্ত্র সংবরণ চুক্তির প্রস্তাব নিয়ে তিনি যে কিছুটা

সংশয়ে রয়েছেন, তাও জানান পাটিল। বলেছেন, "ওই প্রস্তাবটির বিভিন্ন দিক এখনও স্পষ্ট হয়নি।"

গত মাসে ব্যাঙ্ককে ভারত সরকারের সঙ্গে এন এস সি এন (আই এম) জঙ্গিগোষ্ঠীর মধ্যস্থতাকারী প্রাক্তন স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিব পদ্মনাভাইয়ার সঙ্গে তোয়েঙ্গালান মুইভার দু'দিন বৈঠক হয়। নভেম্বরের শেষে দিল্লিতে আসার আমন্ত্রণ জানানো হয় মুইভাকে। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক সূত্রের খবর, মুইভা সেই বৈঠকেই পদ্মনাভাইয়াকে জানিয়ে দেন, যদি তাঁদের ঘাঁটিতে হাত দেওয়া হয়, তাহলে এন এস সি এন (আই এম)-এর সঙ্গে ভারতের যে চুক্তি রয়েছে তা ভঙ্গ করা হবে। এবং কথাবার্তা এগিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়ার জন্য মুইভা দিল্লিতেও আসবেন না। আপাতত স্থির হয়েছে মুইভা-ঘাঁটিকে চিহ্নিত করে সেগুলিকে বাদ দিয়ে সেনা অভিযান করা হবে।

গত সপ্তাহেই মায়ানমার সরকারের এক শীর্ষ নেতা থান শিউ দিল্লিকে জানিয়ে দেয়, মায়ানমারের জমিতে ভারত-বিরোধী কোনও কাজ বরদাস্ত করা হবে না। সন্ত্রাস দমনে কড়া ব্যবস্থা নিতে মায়ানমার দ্বিধা করবে না। উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলে জঙ্গি সমস্যা মোকাবিলায় ভুটানের মতো বাংলাদেশ ও মায়ানমারের জঙ্গি ঘাঁটি নির্মূল করতে মনমোহন সরকার এক মাস ধরে চাপ বাড়িয়েছে। এই মাসের গোড়ায় বিষয়টি নিয়ে মায়ানমারের সরকারি প্রতিনিধিদের কাছে ভারতের স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিব বীরেন্দ্র সিংহ একটি নির্দিষ্ট প্রস্তাব পেশ করেছিলেন।

The General's visit: Uneasy questions

THAT the visit of Myanmar's leader Gen. Than Shwe should have proceeded without incident, to all intents and purposes a normal Head of State visit during the diplomatic season, shows how far we have come in our dealings with that country. Just a few years ago, such an occasion may well have been marked by demonstrations, processions, press editorials questioning the visitor's credentials and other reminders of the fact that the Myanmar regime has overthrown democracy and incarcerated that country's elected leader. But today, the critical voices are muted. A gesture or two was as much the once vocal opposition was able to muster, nothing to disturb the even tenor of the visit. The General received all the honours due to the position he occupies and was able to travel to different parts of the country without anything going amiss. It all suggested that there were no great issues outstanding between India and Myanmar.

A Head of State visit is no occasion for unfriendly display, but it should not blind us to some of the realities within our neighbouring country. Aung San Suu Kyi, the admired leader who emphatically won the popular mandate at the election in 1990, has never been able to assume the office for which her people chose her. The military junta annulled the election results and Suu Kyi herself was placed under restraint. Her heroic resistance earned her worldwide respect and the following year she received the Nobel Peace Prize. She became, and remains, the foremost symbol of resistance to military rule. For over a decade-and-a-half, she has remained under some form of restraint and has had to bear a heavy personal burden. Yet, she has not flinched or

compromised. In the early days of her travails, Aung San Suu Kyi had much sympathy and support in New Delhi. She had been a student here when her mother was ambassador, and there was a wide network of friends and supporters to take up her cause. India, whose democratic instincts were roused by her plight, remained a staunch backer of the ousted leader and maintained distance from the military regime long after others had made their adjustments. Prominent among those who soon came to terms with the regime was China which moved in while others were backing off. Before long China had gained an important foothold in Myanmar's affairs.

As a close neighbour, India could do little more than watch in some dismay. Myanmar had long been plagued by unsettled conditions, with multiple insurgencies in many different parts of the country. There were links between some insurgent groups in Myanmar and similar groups in India, with whom they had ethnic ties. The border across which they moved with ease is difficult to police, being remote and relatively

undeveloped. Curbing the insurgents, which both desired, required joint effort. Thus, of necessity, little by little the ruptured links were revived. As cooperation in dealing with armed groups developed in the border areas, Indian media coverage of events in Myanmar was toned down, especially in All India Radio and other official media. Suu Kyi's cause came to be pursued more actively by private, non-official groups. Persisting political differences did not disturb handling of day-to-day matters. This was especially beneficial for the people of the bordering region, and even the most ideologically driven could hardly object. Nor could there be any quarrel with the way cross-border insurgent activity was brought under some sort of control. Cooperation for such practical purposes was useful and mutually beneficial. The bilateral relationship remained more or less at this low level of exchange for some years, and only gradually did it inch its way onward and upward, so that now high level visits can be undertaken without eyebrows being raised.

The China factor in Myanmar's affairs has kept Indian strategists on their toes.



Gen. Than Shwe in Agra. — AFP

wide angle

SALMAN HAIDAR

There has been much discussion and speculation in the Indian media about Chinese naval bases in Myanmar waters, Chinese airstrips, and more. Such apprehensions have never quite been substantiated as a direct threat to India but nevertheless enough has been said to raise fears of a possible Chinese advance along a vulnerable Indian flank. This is one of the reasons for India to try to raise its profile in Myanmar. Indian eyes have also turned to the road and other transport links that have been developed from China to Myanmar and the burgeoning economic activity that ties the two closer together. Today, China is well placed to take the lead in exploiting Myanmar's abundant natural resources, which some regard as Asia's last remaining treasure house. Such developments can appear disturbing at a strategic level.

The Myanmar visit did not open up new areas of activity; rather, it confirmed the structure of the relationship as it has evolved over the last few years. Security issues seem to have dominated the agenda. The opportunity for economic expansion and development of transit capacity was not taken: it seems that New Delhi remains chary of opening up the North-east to the neighbouring world. In dealing with countries around us it may become necessary from time to time to suppress our democratic instincts, but remaining stuck in the time warp that prevents more normal development of the North-east should become progressively less acceptable. That is where the challenge lies.

(Salman Haidar is a former Foreign Secretary, Govt. of India.)

Gen. Than Shwe in city

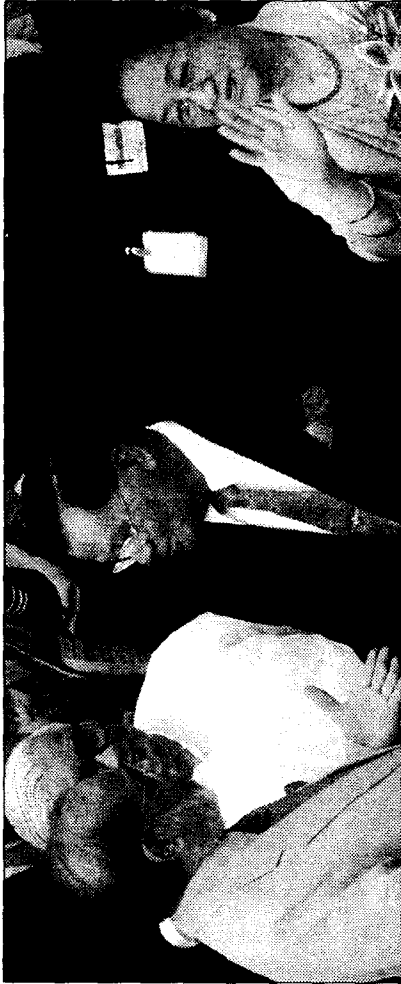
50-5 08/10/04
quadr: sb Asia nubs

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Oct. 28. — Myanmar top military leader and the country's state peace development council chairman General Than Shwe arrived here from Gaya this afternoon. General Than and his wife came on a special Indian Airlines flight. Governor Mr Viren J Shah, state higher education minister Mr Satyasadhan Chakraborty, chief secretary Mr Ashok Gupta and state home secretary Mr Amit Kiran Deb received him at NSC Bose airport. He will leave for Yangon tomorrow afternoon.

Meanwhile, 13 activists of the Association of Protection for Democratic Rights (APDR), were arrested at around 2.30 p.m. this afternoon from the Park Street-JL Nehru Road crossing. They were on their way to the Myanmar consulate at 119, Park Street to submit a memorandum against the high-handedness of the Myanmar military junta towards Aung Sang Suu Kyi, who is spearheading the pro-democracy movement in that country.

On the other hand, the chief minister, Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, welcoming Dr Manmohan Singh's proposal to undertake sustained joint operations with neighbouring countries for combating insurgency in the sub-continent said: "India cannot tolerate the patronage of terrorist outfits by its neighbours."



(Above) General Than Shwe and his wife Naung Thiashwe being received at the airport on Thursday afternoon by the Governor, Mr Viren J Shah, and the state higher education minister, Mr Satyasadhan Chakraborty. (Below) APDR activists courting arrest while demonstrating against the Government at Park Street — The Statesman

জঙ্গি দমনে চুক্তি ভারত, মায়ানমারের

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৫ অক্টোবর: ভারতের প্রস্তাবে সাড়া দিয়ে মায়ানমার আজ জঙ্গি দমনে দু'দেশের পারস্পরিক সহযোগিতা বিষয়ক চুক্তিপত্রে সই করল। জঙ্গি ও অপরাধ দমন বিষয়ক একাধিক চুক্তিপত্রে স্বাক্ষর করার পর আজ মায়ানমার সরকারের অন্যতম শীর্ষ নেতা থান শিউ দিল্লিকে জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, মায়ানমারের জমিতে ভারত বিরোধী কোনও কার্যকলাপ বরদাস্ত করা হবে না। সন্ত্রাস দমনে কড়া ব্যবস্থা নিতে হলেও মায়ানমার দ্বিধা করবে না।

উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের জঙ্গি সমস্যা মোকাবেলায় ভূটানের আদলে বাংলাদেশ এবং মায়ানমারের জঙ্গি ঘাটি নির্মূল করার ব্যাপারে মনমোহন-সরকার গত এক মাস ধরে চাপ বাড়িয়েছে। এ মাসের গোড়ায় বিষয়টি নিয়ে মায়ানমারের সরকারি প্রতিনিধিদের কাছে ভারতের স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিব ধীরেন্দ্র সিংহ একটি নির্দিষ্ট প্রস্তাব পেশ করেছিলেন। মায়ানমারের মাটিতে জঙ্গি শিবিরের তালিকাও ধীরেন্দ্র সে দেশের নেতাদের হাতে তুলে দেন। তাতে সাড়া দিয়ে আজ আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে সহায়তার হাত বাড়াল মায়ানমার। ইতিমধ্যে একই ভাবে বাংলাদেশের উপরেও চাপ সৃষ্টি করেছে ভারত। সে দেশকেও দেওয়া হয়েছে জঙ্গি তালিকা এবং একগুচ্ছ

প্রস্তাব। আগামী ৩১ অক্টোবর দিল্লি আসছেন বাংলাদেশের বিদেশমন্ত্রী মোর্শেদ খান। জানুয়ারি মাসে সার্ক সম্মেলনের আগেই যাতে মায়ানমারের মতই বাংলাদেশের কাছ থেকে প্রতিশ্রুতি আদায় করা যায় সে জন্য কূটনৈতিক স্তরে তৎপরতা বাড়ছে। কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী পাটিলের কথায়, “জঙ্গি ঘাটি বিনাশের প্রক্ষে মায়ানমার বাংলাদেশের তুলনায় এখনও পর্যন্ত অনেক ইতিবাচক সাড়া দিয়েছে।”

আজ বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহের সঙ্গে থান শিউ-এর বৈঠকের পর বিদেশমন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র নভতেজ সারনা জানিয়েছেন, “সন্ত্রাস মোকাবেলা, বেআইনি অস্ত্র পাচার, মাদক পাচার, সংগঠিত অপরাধ, আন্তর্জাতিক অর্থনৈতিক অপরাধ, বে-আইনি বাণিজ্য, সাইবার-অপরাধ মোকাবেলায় পারস্পরিক সহযোগিতা বাড়ানো নিয়ে দু'দেশের মধ্যে চুক্তিপত্র সই হয়েছে।” বলা হয়েছে এই ‘পারস্পরিক সহযোগিতা’র বিষয়ে তথ্যের আদানপ্রদান, যৌথ গবেষণা ইত্যাদি ঘটানো হবে। দু'দেশের মধ্যে যে যে চুক্তি হয়েছে তা যাতে বাস্তবায়িত হয় তা দেখার জন্য দু'দেশের মধ্যে একটি যৌথ পরামর্শদাতা গোষ্ঠী তৈরি করা হবে বলে বিদেশমন্ত্রকের পক্ষ থেকে জানানো হয়েছে।

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

26 OCT 2004

MoU with a difference inked

Promises crackdown on NE insurgents in Myanmar, cyber crime

Saurabh Shukla
New Delhi, October 25

IN AN agreement that is expected to tighten the noose around North-east insurgent groups operating from Myanmar, India and Myanmar today signed an MoU on cooperation on non-traditional security issues.

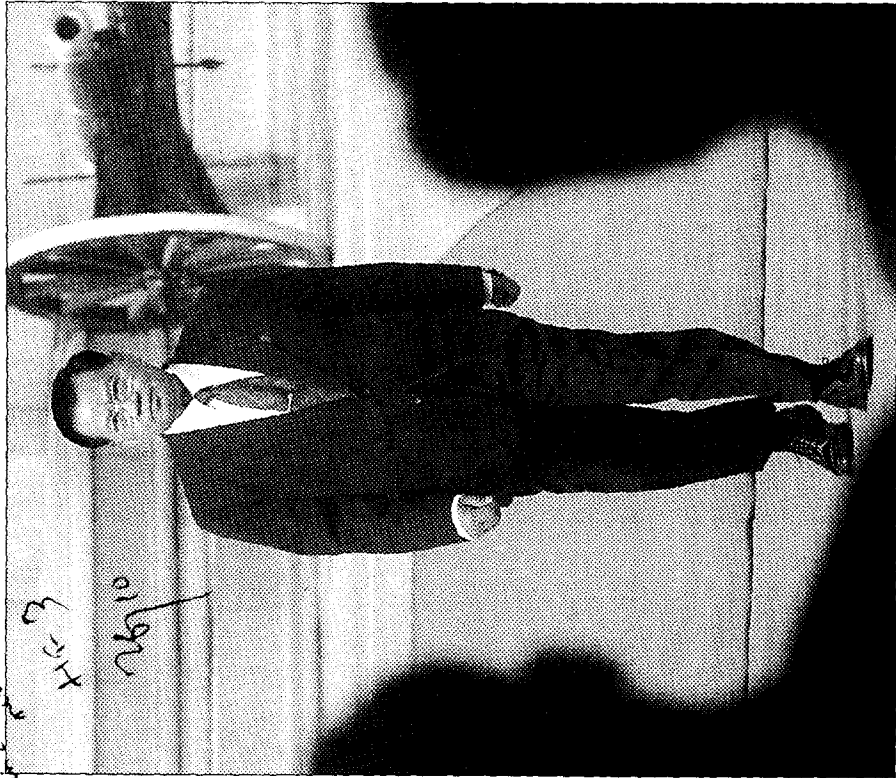
The MoU was exchanged in the presence of the visiting Senior General Than Shwe, who heads the military leadership as well as the State Democratic Peace Committee of Myanmar.

Shwe held a lengthy discussion with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on a range of issues including India's security concerns over the insurgent groups. Currently, groups such as the Ufa, the NSCN, the MPLF have their camps in Myanmar.

Interestingly, the two sides changed the nomenclature of the MoU from the usual on counter-terrorism to give it a broader focus.

The MoU would institutionalise security cooperation between the two sides, which will not only exchange operational intelligence but also personnel. This could mean a possibility of joint operations if the need arises. In fact, New Delhi will also provide necessary military hardware to Myanmar.

The MoU also covers areas such as money laundering and cyber crime. Sources say, Shwe also assured India that based on specific intelligence inputs Myanmar is willing to mount a military operation against Indian insurgent groups operating from Myanmar and



AP
Myanmar's Senior Gen. Than Shwe inspects the guard of honour during an official welcome ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Monday.

beef up vigil along its 1,436 km border with India.

He assured that Myanmar will not allow its territory to be used for anti-Myanmar

activity. The MoU also entails cooperation on law enforcement and a consultative group has been set up to ensure operational cooperation on these insurgent groups.

Meanwhile, New Delhi gently raised the issue of democracy and linked it with economic development and lasting peace.

"The Indian leadership also offered to support Myanmar in the democratic process," the spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs said.

Myanmar also told India that it will support its bid to enter the UNSC as a permanent member.

New Delhi also offered help to Myanmar in building a rail network from Yangon and Mandalay, besides cooperation in infrastructure projects that entails upgrading roads and building cross-border highways.

Engaging Myanmar serves India's strategic objectives and gives it inroads into the ASEAN region. By enhancing economic cooperation which is now expected to touch over \$1 billion, it wants to build an economic stake for Myanmar for holistic cooperation with India.

In fact, Shwe's delegation comprises eight senior ministers, which reflects the growing engagement between the two countries. The two sides also agreed to cement their cooperation in the energy sector, and India will explore more blocks in Myanmar for exploration. It is also exploring the possibility of a pipeline along the Kaladan river Valley, besides a swap arrangement involving Bangladesh and Myanmar, sources said.

Focus on rebels in Myanmar pact

Democracy on general's lips

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Oct. 25: Visiting Myanmar military ruler Senior General Than Shwe today told his hosts his country will not allow its soil to be used by Northeast insurgents against Indian interests.

The State Peace and Development Committee chairman also expressed his "sincere commitment" to restore democracy in his country, a week after ousting a fellow general credited with setting in motion a roadmap for change.

The military strongman, the first head of government from Yangon to visit India in 24 years, said it was the only way to bring peace and prosperity to his country, now under army rule for several years.

If Shwe promised a co-ordinated operation with Indian troops along the 1,400-km border between the two countries, it was not said publicly. But expressing the intent to do so, Myanmar today signed a memorandum of understanding with India for cooperation in "non-traditional security issues". The MoU was signed by foreign minister K. Natwar Singh and his counterpart Nyan Win.

It was explained later that the MoU would enhance cooperation between the two sides against terrorism, arms smuggling, money laundering, drug trafficking, international economic violations

and cyber crimes.

The mechanism for cooperation includes exchange of information and personnel, co-ordination between law enforcement agencies and joint research. Two other MoUs on cooperation in hydroelectric projects in Myanmar and for stronger cultural ties were also signed.

Shwe's assurance will give the Indian government an additional handle to urge Bangladesh to follow Yangon's example. Bhutan had launched a military operation last year to flush out Northeast insurgents from its soil. With Myanmar also committing itself against the rebels of the Northeast, Dhaka might find it a little more difficult to be indifferent to Delhi's security concerns.

Bangladesh foreign minister Morshed Khan is arriving here at the end of the month and the issue of camps of Northeast rebels in Bangladesh will most likely make its way into the discussions between him and the leadership in Delhi.

Shwe met almost all key members of the Indian leadership, including President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Vice-President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Predictably, along with the presence of Northeast insurgents in Myanmar the issue of democracy also came up during the discussions. Many members of the ruling Con-



Manmohan Singh greets Than Shwe at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday. (AFP)

gress-led coalition, particularly the foreign minister, have been ardent supporters of Myanmar's democratic leader Aung Sang Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest.

Shwe explained to the Indian leaders that an exercise is on in Myanmar to prepare a new constitution for the coun-

try which would have the "widest possible national consensus". He pointed out that Myanmar has several ethnic groups whose views and aspirations should be met by the new constitution. As India has a well-established democratic tradition, the SPDC chairman sought Delhi's help

in the current exercise.

The Indian leaders agreed with him that transition to democracy was a "complex" process, but both the Prime Minister as well as the foreign minister underlined that democracy offered the best possibilities for political stability and economic development.

Three targets in closer ties

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Oct. 25: In its attempt to strengthen ties with Myanmar, India is eyeing three targets — counter Beijing's growing influence on Yangon, gain access to the strong economies of South-east Asian nations and bring the Northeast under Delhi's control.

Indian officials claim they are not engaged in a "zero-sum with China" in Myanmar. Instead, they argue, Delhi intends to provide Myanmar room for manoeuvre. This in effect means trying to wean it away from its current "over dependency" on Beijing.

However, South Block insists Myanmar's strategic importance cannot be seen only through the China prism. A close relationship between Delhi and Yangon provides both sides the opportunity to better ties in trade, energy, security, infrastructure development and tourism.

The Northeast insurgent groups have been taking advantage of the 1,400 km porous border to take shelter in Myanmar whenever Indian security forces turn on the heat. But for Myanmar, its borders with Thailand and China get priority, not the Northeast.

India has launched several development projects in the past five years to draw Yangon's attention. The Moreh-Kalemao road, the trilateral

highway project from Moreh to Maesot in Thailand passing through Myawaddy in Myanmar and an optical fibre telecommunication network along the highway at a cost of \$800 million are some of them.

India is Myanmar's fourth largest trading partner and the two-way trade has reached over \$400 million. It is also the second largest export market for Myanmar after Thailand and absorbs 25 per cent of the neighbour's total exports. The two sides aim to increase their trade volume to over \$1 billion by 2006.

India is also helping its neighbour build a \$30 million crude oil refinery in Thanlyin — it has invested \$4.5 million in the project — and is involved with South Korea's Daewoo in exploration and production in a gas field on the western Rakhine coast.

India sees Myanmar not only as a bridge to Southeast Asia, but also as an alternative route for transit of goods.

However, the Chinese presence in Myanmar has been worrying India's leadership. The countries have been close since 1988 when the junta crushed a pro-democracy uprising and barred Aung Sang Suu Kyi from power despite her election victory two years later.

In the past one-and-a-half decades, Beijing's influence has grown significantly on Myanmar's defence, economy and politics.

Myanmar assurance on insurgency

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, Oct. 25. — India and Myanmar today signed three accords including one on enhancing cooperation in fighting terrorism and other crimes as visiting Myanmarese top military leader Gen. Than Shwe assured New Delhi that insurgent groups would not be allowed to operate from his country to harm Indian interests. During wide-ranging discussions Gen. Than had with prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh and other leaders, he conveyed the “sincere commitment” of the current government in Myanmar to bring about democracy and sought India’s support for this process.

The prime minister and external affairs minister Mr K Natwar Singh conveyed their best wishes to Gen. Than in his efforts to establish a democratic government in Myanmar. They agreed with him that the transition to democracy was complex and yet it offered the best possibilities for redressing the problems of political instability and economic development, external affairs ministry spokesman Mr Navtej Sarna told reporters here.

Under the MoU for cooperation in non-traditional security issues signed by Mr Natwar Singh and Myanmar foreign minister Mr Nyan Win, both sides have committed themselves to enhancing cooperation against terrorism, arms smuggling, money laundering, drug trafficking, organised crime, international economic crimes and cyber crimes.

A fascist Disneyland: page 9

THE STATESMAN

26 OCT 2004

Top Myanmar leader arrives in India

New Delhi
24 OCTOBER

MYANMAR'S top leader Than Shwe arrived here on Sunday on a six-day "historic" state visit for talks with Indian leaders on a range of issues covering security, economics, trade and culture.

The two countries will sign an accord on Monday in the field of non-traditional security issues during the visit of General Than, the first by a head of state from the country in 24 years.

During the talks, New Delhi is likely to convey its serious concerns regarding the operation of insurgent groups out of Myanmar. General Than was warmly received at Delhi airport by minister of state for external affairs E. Ahamad and foreign secretary Shyam Saran. New Delhi views the visit as historic because it is



MAKING HISTORY: General Than Shwe (right) with Indian junior foreign minister E. Ahamad upon his arrival in New Delhi on Sunday. — AFP

the first head of state-head of government interaction in 17 years and is expected to contribute significantly to a further

consolidation and expansion of bilateral relations. A cultural exchange programme for 2004-06 and an MoU on the Tamanthi

Hydro-electric Project in Myanmar will also be signed.

General Than, who is chairman of the State Peace & Development Council (SPDC), is accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising several Cabinet ministers, including those looking after industry, energy, rail transportation, communications, science, technology and health. General Than will meet President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, vice-president Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and hold talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest and concern. The Myanmar leader will also hold meetings with external affairs minister K. Natwar Singh and Leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani.

Bilateral meetings between ministers of both countries will be held simultaneously. — PTI

The Economic Times

25 OCT 2004

Myanmar on cautious Delhi radar

PRANAY SHARMA

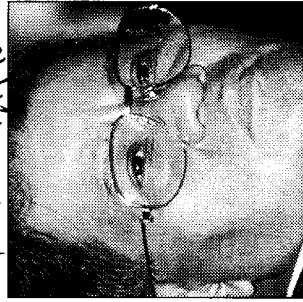
New Delhi, Oct. 20: The power struggle within Myanmar's ruling junta that ousted Prime Minister Khin Nyunt and brought in a hardliner will not derail Yangon's top man, Senior General Than Shwe's state visit to India from October 24.

The five-day trip of the State Peace and Development Committee chairman (SPDC) — the first by a top Yangon leader — is being seen as the culmination of the process started by the two countries to develop strong economic and security relations.

India has been closely watching the developments in

Yangon and is aware that hardliners are coming back into the saddle. But these are still early days and South Block is yet to make up its mind about the final outcome of the developments that saw the ousted Prime Minister put under house arrest yesterday.

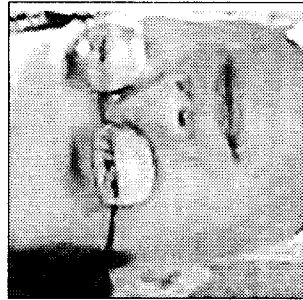
One reason why India wants closer links with the military rulers is to ensure it gets the SPDC's cooperation in tackling northeast insurgents who have often taken shelter in Myanmar. Delhi also knows that Lieutenant General Soe Win, the country's new Prime Minister, has served as Myanmar's commander for the northwestern borders and is,



Senior General Than Shwe (left) and Lieutenant General Soe Win

therefore, aware of the "ground reality" in India's northeast.

Win was commander of Myanmar's northwest, which borders 1,400 km of India's



conclusions whether Myanmar will do what Bhutan did last year to drive out rebels from its territory, but it feels encouraged that key leaders in Yangon are aware of the situation in the region.

Shwe, whose visit comes at a time when militant violence has escalated in some parts of the northeast, will get a chance to meet almost all top leaders, including President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and foreign minister K. Natwar Singh. He will also visit Both Gaya and Calcutta.

India knows the northwest border is not a security priority for Yangon, whose problems stem more from the border

with Thailand and China. The only way Delhi can force Myanmar to focus on the region is to ensure that it has high economic stakes in that area. Sources said the arterial Moreh-Kalemao road and other infrastructure activities of India would, therefore, come into play to make the military rulers interested in the area.

India is also looking at Myanmar's natural gas resources and has talked to a South Korean company. The Indian leadership is also thinking of reviving some of the traditional river routes from Calcutta to Myanmar that existed during British rule.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK TO ATTRACT FDI

PM stresses 'Look East' policy

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct 19. — The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, today reiterated his government's 'Look East' policy, saying it had more economic rationale and commercial content than a mere foreign policy orientation.

"I would like to affirm once again that our government will intensify the process of regional cooperation and integration," Dr Singh said inaugurating the third India-Asean Business Summit here.

Towards this, he said, a regulatory framework would be set up to create an enabling environment to attract FDI to the tune of \$150 billion in telecom, airports, railways and power.

"We are working towards creation of a regulatory framework in infrastructure sector that would be transparent and independent, and based

on international best practices," he said.

The Prime Minister referred to the early harvest programme, which provides immediate tariff concessions through trade liberalisation. This, he said, was a confidence building measure and a harbinger of what is to follow. In this context, he

"We are working towards creation of a regulatory framework in infrastructure sector that would be transparent and independent, and based on international best practices"

underlined that government had set itself the objective of stepping up the rate of growth of economy to at least seven per cent to eight per cent.

"We believe the Indian economy can absorb up to \$150 billion of foreign direct investment in the infrastructure sector over the next 10 years. There is, therefore, a large

window of opportunity for Asean businesses to invest in India," Dr Singh emphasised.

India's requirements of capital in infrastructure were very large, he said. Airports and railways alone needed \$55 billion in the next 10 years. Power and telecom sector looked for \$75 billion and \$25 billion respectively in the next five years.

"Equally, Indian business must invest in South-East Asia," Dr Singh said noting some attractive examples of successful Indian enterprise in the region. "We need more, especially in the newly industrialising economies of Asean, where opportunities for new investment are presenting themselves."

He also advised the state governments to be proactive in developing mutually beneficial cooperation with the Asean region. There is much that the state governments could do to promote trade and commerce with South-East Asia, he added.

THE STATESMAN

20 OCT 2004

Asean-FTA to open base for Indian firms: Malaysia

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 20. — Malaysia hopes the Asean-India Free Trade Area (FTA) will broaden opportunities for Indian companies to invest in the country, using it as a base to manufacture and export their goods and services in the region and the global market.

“Business opportunities with Malaysia should be viewed in the context of the regional market and various special trading arrangements that the country has and will establish with its trading partners,” Mr Tan Sri Halim Mohamad, chairman of the Malaysian External Trade and Development Corporation told a seminar organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) here today.

Heading a trade and investment mission seeking to update the business community in India on the opportunities in Malaysia, Mr Mohamad noted that Asean, with a combined population of over half a billion and a combined GDP of \$750 billion, would be an attractive market.

Malaysia, which is leading the on-going negotiations on the Asean-India FTA, is also engaged in bilateral talks with countries such as China, Japan and Korea. It has signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the USA, which provides a platform to establish an FTA in the future. All these would help the Indian businesses as well, he said.

With the liberalised tariff environment in the Asean-FTA, companies located in any Asean country can now access the entire market in the region at tariffs of between 0-5 per cent. Malaysia contributes 25 per cent to the intra-Asean trade.

THE STATESMAN 21 SEP 2004

India
3/8/04

India, Thailand move towards free trade area

HD-12
31/8

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 30. India today took the first step towards a free trade area (FTA) with Thailand by concluding a protocol to implement one of the facets of the framework agreement on FTA. The protocol is meant to implement the Early Harvest Scheme (EHS) which provides for fast track elimination of tariffs on common items of export interest for both the countries.

The protocol signed here today by the Commerce and Industry Minister, Kamal Nath, and the Thai Commerce Minister, Watana Muangsook, will come into effect from September 1.

32 items exempted

The early harvest schemes provides for elimination of tariffs in 82 items in three phases over two years. Tariffs would be brought down to 50 per cent on September 1, and by 75 per cent in the subsequent year. By 2006, there will be a duty-free trade regime on 82 items. Later the

second phase of FTA implementation will begin with the aim of having a free trade area between India and Thailand by 2010.

Under the timetable laid down in the framework agreement, negotiations for FTA in goods have to be concluded by March 2005 and for services and investment by January 2006. The 82 items on which tariffs are to be reduced include gear boxes, television picture tubes, wrist watches, refrigerators, textile spindles, spinning rings, machinery for moulding, pipes, boiler shells, ball bearings, pulleys, signalling equipment and printed circuits.

Automobile sector

Speaking after the signing ceremony, Mr. Kamal Nath sought to reassure domestic industry especially the automobile sector and said their fears were unfounded. He said the Government was aware of the high input costs faced by the industry and was in the process of moving towards an inverted du-

ty structure as in other countries.

Historic landmark

Signing of the protocol marked a historic landmark in bilateral relations between India and Thailand and was also a major step in the country's 'Look East Policy'.

He said Thailand became the second country after Sri Lanka with which India would be implementing an FTA in a phased manner. "Apart from our bilateral engagement with Thailand, we are also engaged in negotiations with Singapore, Asean and BIMST-EC to strengthen economic cooperation. We believe that our bilateral engagement with Thailand would act as a catalyst towards our overall engagement with Sean and BIMST-EC." Mr. Kamal Nath said the agreement would help in increasing the formation of joint ventures and investments in both countries. It would also help in doubling the bilateral trade from the present level of \$ 1.5 billion in next few years.

31 AUG 2004

HD-9
23/8

India to be sounded on Malacca Straits security

By P.S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, AUG. 28. India is likely to be consulted on security issues concerning the safe passage of ships along the busy Straits of Malacca.

This has been indicated by the Singapore Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Security and Defence, Tony Tan, at a recent press conference here.

Responding to a question from *The Hindu* whether the proposal of the U.S. for a Regional Maritime Security Initiative, in regard to the Straits of Malacca, had at all taken off, Dr. Tan cited India among the countries that Malaysia and Singapore recently agreed upon to cooperate to keep the straits safe for international navigation.

He did not specify how New Delhi could cooperate.

Intelligence-sharing

Malaysia's High Commissioner to Singapore, N. Parameswaran, who responded to a question on the same subject at a separate meeting with the Foreign Correspondents Association here, said his country was "uncomfortable"

with the idea of any "foreign presence" for the purpose of security along the Straits of Malacca. He indicated, however, that intelligence-sharing could be a mode of international cooperation in this regard.

The strategically located Straits of Malacca and the Singapore Straits are among the economically crucial waterways for international trade and other communications. For several months, nearly two years ago, India had provided naval escort for the passage of "high value American cargo" through the Straits of Malacca, under a specific arrangement that was agreed upon between Washington and New Delhi. The littoral states concerned — Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia — had agreed to let India operate in that fashion.

Coordinated patrols

Dr. Tan, in his latest remarks, said coordinated patrols by the littoral states were among the "many ways" in which security along these waterways could be ensured. Malaysia had also suggested that "we look into other areas of (cooperation) like, may

be, having security forces, on a random basis, on some of the ships (passing through the straits). Just like air-marshals on aeroplanes, we could have sea marshals".

Elaborating, he said: "We (Singapore and Malaysia) also agree that we should not confine that cooperation only to the littoral states, but also include other states which have an interest in the Straits of Malacca and the Straits of Singapore. And, we will work not only with other countries like the U.S. or Japan or India but also with international bodies like the United Nations".

But, he said, "what is important to remember is that all of these efforts must take into account the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the littoral states. So, we will not do anything which will infringe on this sovereignty". Within these parameters, Dr. Tan said: "The U.S. can help in many ways, by providing training, by providing more information. And, this is something which we (Singapore and Malaysia) will be discussing with the U.S. and with other countries including, I hope, with India in the coming months."

THE HINDU

29 AUG 1988

Defiant Jakarta executes Indian

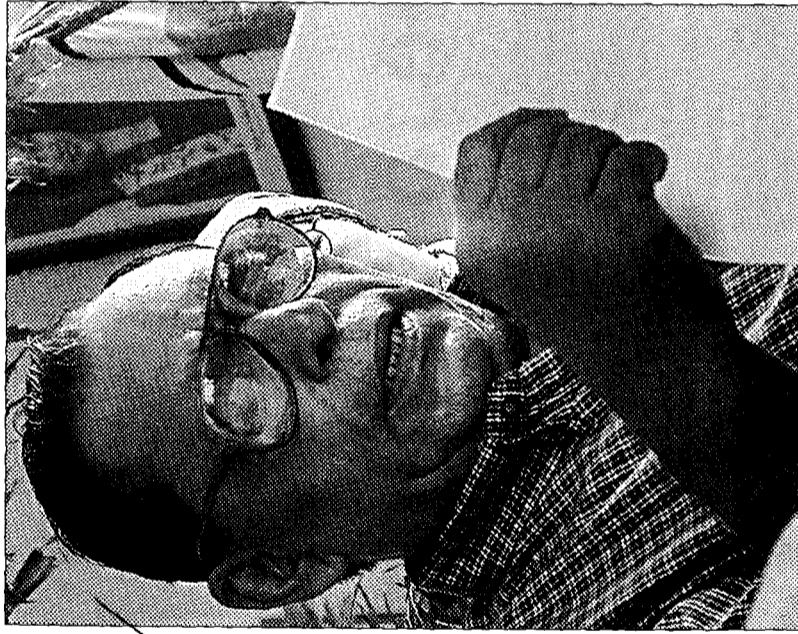
'Drug peddler' claims unfair conviction

Agencies
Jakarta, August 5

INDONESIA TODAY executed an Indian national, arrested in 1994 for drug smuggling, defying international criticism to carry out its first execution in three years.

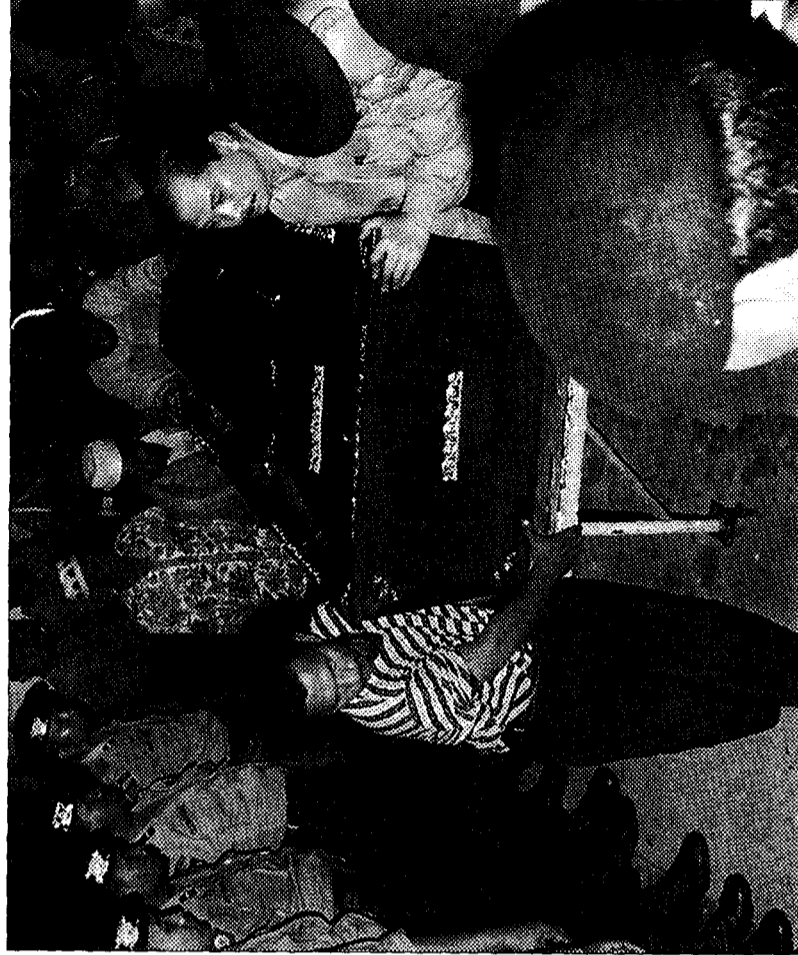
Despite last-minute appeals by New Delhi, Amnesty International and the European Union, Ayodhya Prasad Chaubey, 67, faced a firing squad in Medan, the capital of North Sumatra province. "He was executed at 2.30 this morning and buried three hours later at a Muslim cemetery (Chaubey was a recent convert to Islam)," Kemas Yahya Rachman, a spokesman for the attorney-general's office, said.

In a statement released on Wednesday, the European Union called on Indonesia not to abandon what it termed the country's "de facto moratorium on the death penalty. The EU considers the death penalty a cruel and inhuman form of punishment," it said. "It



does not serve as a deterrent, and miscarriages of justice are irreversible." In an interview with SCTV television hours before his execution, Ayodhya complained he had been unfairly convicted and said he wanted

to speak to Indonesia's justice minister. "Why am I being punished when there is no evidence?" he said in fluent Indonesian. "I am just a man, I can live only once." Ayodhya was arrested along with two Thai nationals



A file photograph of Ayodhya Prasad Chaubey in Medan, Indonesia. (Right) His body being taken for burial after his execution on drug smuggling charges.

als in Medan in 1994 after airport officials confiscated 12 kg of heroin. All three were sentenced to death in 1996. The two Thai nationals remain on death row.

There are around 65 people awaiting execution in In-

killings in five years.

President Megawati Sukarnoputri, who is seeking reelection in September, has vowed to get tough on drug smugglers. Death penalty for drug dealers is not unpopular in Indonesia.

AP

Patient India wants Thailand operation theatre shut down

Vir Sanghvi
Bangkok, July 30

Hf 1 5/17

EVEN AS Prime Minister Manmohan Singh flew to the beach resort of Hua Hin to meet Thailand's highly revered King, a team of officials negotiated with the Nagas in the Thai town of Chiang Mai.

Why Chiang Mai? Why Thailand? Well, because Thailand — and Bangkok in particular — has long been the staging ground for all kinds of operations concerning India.

Nearly everybody has a presence here. The Nagas have an office in Bangkok. Ufa leaders lived here in exile. The Bodos make frequent trips to the Thai capital. ISI is known to distribute counterfeit Indian currency from Bangkok. Chhota Rajan escaped from a Bangkok hospital after a botched hit on his life: a Thai court recently handed down the death penalty to the hit-man. Chiang Mai remains the centre of the drugs sent to India.

Till recently, Bangkok appealed to everybody for several reasons. One: entry is easy because visas are given on arrival. Two: it is near India and the cost of living is less than in Bombay or Delhi. And three: the Thais have traditionally adopted a laissez-faire policy towards everything that does not directly concern them.

But in recent months, Bangkok is becoming a little less welcoming. The Nagas were perturbed when their leader Muivah was jailed some years ago for travelling on a false passport. Though Muivah was released after several months in jail, his associates have now become more careful in their dealings. The Assamese separatist groups have recognised that they are no longer welcome.

After the Chhota Rajan shoot-out, the underworld has moved



AFP
Manmohan Singh with Thai PM Thaksin Shinawatra in Bangkok.

to the more congenial climes of Malaysia. And even ISI activity has reduced.

India reckons that Thailand has changed its policies after 9/11 and the bombings in Bali. A few months ago, Thai forces killed over 100 Muslim extremists in the country's southern region (near Phuket) and the Thais are intensely worried that Islamic militancy could wreck the country's image as a tourist paradise.

All this has worked to India's advantage. So has the attitude of Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who is also the owner of one of Thailand's largest industrial conglomerates and who believes that India represents a huge market for Thai companies.

Nevertheless, some problems remain. The drug mafia in the Chiang Mai region still flourishes. And there is evidence that officers in Thailand's notoriously corrupt army are still willing to sell arms to separatist groups. Issues like these will dominate National Security Adviser J.N. Dixit's talks with his Thai counterpart.

Another report on Page 3

THE HINDU TAMIL NADU 31 JUL 2001

Indo-Thai FTA from Sept

BANGKOK, July 30. — In a major leap in bilateral economic relations, India and Thailand today finalised the modalities for implementing the first phase of the Free Trade Agreement between the two countries from September. They will start tariff reduction under the pact on 82 agreed items in three years.

Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh met his Thai counterpart Mr Thaksin Shinawatra during his visit here for the BIMSTEC Summit to sort out the thorny issues and finalised an agreement on Rules of Origin, paving the way for the FTA's implementation.

Under the first phase of the FTA agreement called the Early Harvest Scheme, tariffs would be reduced by 50 per cent of the existing rates on the 82 items in the first year. In the second year, it will reach 75 per cent. From 1 September 2006,

Asean plus three: Make it four, says Manmohan

BANGKOK, July 30. — Fav-
ouring the creation of an
Asian community, India tod-
ay said it should be included
in the ongoing dialogue that
the Asean has been holding
with some of the leading na-
tions in Asia. "The place of India in the Ase-
an would demonstrate 'the place of India in
the Asean scheme of things'," Dr Manmo-
han Singh told Thai daily *The Nation*. — PTI



both countries will have duty-free regime on all these items. The second phase of the FTA will begin from then onwards and the two countries will have free trade regime by 2010. — PTI

THE STATESMAN

তাইল্যান্ড হয়ে ভারতে জুঙ্গি ঢোকা রুখতে চায় ব্যাঙ্কক

সাঁফ রিপোর্টার, ব্যাঙ্কক, ৩০ জুলাই: তাইল্যান্ডকে টানজিট রুট হিসাবে ব্যবহার করে জঙ্গিরা ভারতে চুকছে, এ কথা মেনে নিয়েই দুই দেশ এ ব্যাপারে যথোচিত ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে। ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে আজ তাই-প্রাঙ্গিক বিষয়ের পাশাপাশি ওই ব্যাপারেও ঐকমত্য হয়েছে। মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গেই এসেছেন জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা পরিষদের প্রধান জে এন দীক্ষিত। নিরাপত্তার বিষয়টি নিয়ে ব্যাঙ্কক প্রশাসনের সঙ্গে তিনিই যাবতীয় আলোচনা চালাচ্ছেন। দীক্ষিত বলেন, "ব্যাঙ্ককের ভৌগোলিক ও ষ্ট্রাটাজিক অবস্থানটাই এমন যে নিরাপত্তার বিষয়টি এখানে খুব প্রাসঙ্গিক।" কাল প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহও মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছিলেন, বিমস্টেকের সর্বসম্মত অস্ত্রাবে সন্ত্রাস ও নিরাপত্তার বিষয়টি রয়েছে।

তাইল্যান্ডে জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা না থাকলেও নিরাপত্তা বিভাগের প্রাসঙ্গিক অফিসারদের সঙ্গে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কথা হচ্ছে। এখানে দুইদ ইব্রাহিমের ভাই আনিস ইব্রাহিমের বিশাল ডিপার্টমেন্টের স্টোর আছে।

দাউদের একাধিক ব্যবসা এখানে রমরম করছে। তবে দাউদের ডি কোম্পানি-র মতো অপরাধ জগতের সঙ্গে জড়িত আর কেউ যাতে বিশেষ সুবিধা না পায় তার জন্য তাইল্যান্ডের সরকার এখন তৎপর। জে এন দীক্ষিতকেও তারা সে কথা জানিয়েছেন। তাদের এই তৎপরতার প্রধান কারণ, এ দেশের দক্ষিণ প্রান্তের ৩টি জেলায় মুসলিম মৌলবানী সন্ত্রাস হঠাৎ মাথাচাড়া দিয়ে উঠেছে। গত ৪ জানুয়ারি এখানে জিহাদি সংগঠনের ঘটনো বিক্ষোভের ৫ নিরাপত্তা কর্মীর মৃত্যু হয়েছিল। গত ২৮ এপ্রিল আরও একটি ঘটনায় মসজিদের মধ্যে দুকে জঙ্গিরা প্রায় ১০০ জনকে হত্যা করে। তাইল্যান্ডের সরকার জানে আল-কায়দা ও পাক জিহাদি গোষ্ঠী মালয়েশিয়ার মুসলিম যুবকদের প্রশিক্ষণ দিয়ে এ দেশে তৎপর হয়ে উঠেছে।

তাইল্যান্ড থেকে সমুদ্রপথে বহু জঙ্গি বাংলাদেশের চট্টগ্রাম বন্দরে যাচ্ছে। সেখান থেকে জাল পাসপোর্ট নিয়ে তাদের অনেকেই কলকাতা পৌঁছচ্ছে। মাদক চোরালানে এই চক্র সক্রিয়। আজ দু দেশের প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আলোচনায় এই প্রশসঙ্গও এসেছে বলে জানিয়েছেন বিদেশ মন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ। জাল নোট ও

জাল পাসপোর্ট তৈরির বহু চক্র এখানে রয়েছে। জাল নোট তৈরির এই রকম এক চক্রের ৪ জনকে পুলিশ সম্বন্ধিত করেছে। ধৃতদের মধ্যে ৩ জন পাক নাগরিক, চতুর্থ ব্যক্তি এ দেশেরই। তাইল্যান্ডে অস্ত্র বাজারেরও রমরমা। এগান থেকে জঙ্গিরা সহজে বেআইনি অস্ত্র কিনতে পারে। এল টি টি ই জঙ্গিরা নিয়মিত এখান থেকেই অস্ত্র কেনে। 'কে পি' নামে এল টি টি ই-র এক জঙ্গি এনাকায় অস্ত্র কেনা-বোচার ব্যবসায় জড়িত।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী আজ ভুটানের প্রধানমন্ত্রী এইচ ই লিওনাপো জিগমি ওয়াই থিমলের সঙ্গেও ওরিয়েন্টাল হোটেলের এমবাসি রুমে দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠক সেরেছেন। মালি নেপাল ও বাংলাদেশের প্রধানমন্ত্রীদের সঙ্গেও তিনি বৈঠক করবেন। ওই বৈঠকগুলিতেও সন্ত্রাস নিয়ে আলোচনা হতে চলেছে বলে জানা গিয়েছে।

বিমস্টেকের সম্মিলিত বৈঠক হবে আগামী কাল। কিন্তু এই মঞ্চে পাকিস্তানকে রাখা হয়নি। কূটনৈতিক মহলে প্রশ্ন উঠেছে, ভারত এখানে সক্রিয় ভূমিকা নিয়ে পাকিস্তানকে কোনঠাসা করার চেষ্টা করছে। বঙ্গোপসাগরের পার্শ্ববর্তী রাষ্ট্রগুলির মধ্যে আর্থিক সহযোগিতার প্রশ্ন তুলে এ মঞ্চ করা হলেও পাকিস্তান

এতে খুশি নয়। বিমস্টেক প্রথম গঠিত হওয়ার সময় সার্ককে তুলে দিয়ে এই গোষ্ঠীকে রাখার দাবিও নানা মহল থেকে উঠেছিল। এই মঞ্চে নেপাল ও ভুটানকে আনা হয় ও মরিশাসকে অনাকুর কথা চলছে। এতেও পাকিস্তান যথেষ্ট অসন্তুষ্ট। তাপে পাকিস্তানকে বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের পক্ষ থেকে বিমস্টেকের সন্ত্রাস-প্রশসঙ্গ-প্রগ্রহ প্রকাশ করা হয়েছিল। অস্ত্র-আলোচনায় প্রথম সারির সংবাদপত্রে পাকিস্তানকে এখতিয়ে প্রদশ মন্ত্রকের নজর এড়ায়নি।

সিঙ্গাপুরের মতো তাইল্যান্ডের সঙ্গেও ভারতের বন্দি প্রত্যর্পণ চুক্তির কথা হচ্ছে। ১৯৯৫ সাল থেকে তাইল্যান্ডের সঙ্গে এই চুক্তি নিয়ে আলোচনা চলছে। '৯৫ সালে ব্যাঙ্কক ও '৯৭ সালে নয়াদিল্লিতে এই নিয়ে বৈঠক হয়। মাদক চোরালান মোখে দু দেশের একটি মৌ স্বাক্ষরিত হবে বলে জানা গিয়েছে। প্রাক্তন উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী আডবানী ২০০৩ সালের ৩১ জানুয়ারি ব্যাঙ্ককে তাই-প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে বৈঠক করে মৌ-এর খসড়া টিক করেছিলেন। মনমোহন সিংহের সময় সেটি চূড়ান্ত রূপ পেতে চলেছে।

P. L. D. N.
S. B. D. N.

India to take re-look at Free Trade Agreement with Thailand

1112-1
20/7

By K. Venugopal

BANGKOK, JULY 29. India will take a re-look at the Free Trade Agreement with Thailand that the Vajpayee Government had worked out last year, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said today.

He was speaking to presspersons on board his special aircraft that took him to Bangkok for the first summit of BIMST-EC, the group of seven countries located around the Bay of Bengal.

Dr. Singh pointed to the fact that his Government was just two-months-old, and therefore needed time to take a hard look at the provisions of the Free Trade Agreement. It was not clear whether the new approach represented the political twist upon the change of government or was a response to pleas from the domestic industry. It could be both.

Over the past few days, Dr. Singh has been telling his staff that the Government must promise less and deliver more. The political inference from that is that the previous Government had promised tall and could not deliver on that.

There has been enough noise

from industry as well. Thailand has a fairly large automobile base with investments from Japanese majors such as Toyota and Honda, and bids to be the Detroit of the east. India's auto majors and auto component makers have expressed apprehensions that imports from Thailand could swamp them. Some have even suggested direly that it would result in the de-industrialisation of India.

In this context, some provisions of the Free Trade Agreement signed with Thailand last year, which the Government believes might not be realistic, may

therefore get a re-look.

PM's assurance

Yet the Prime Minister handed the assurance that the first phase of the implementation of the agreement, called the early harvest programme, scheduled to start on September 1, will go through though. The papers, in fact, will be signed by Dr. Singh and his Thailand counterpart Thaksin Shinawatra at their bilateral meeting on Friday.

The early harvest scheme covers just around 80 items of goods, and does not include automobiles or their components

that have become fairly sensitive issues.

Dr. Singh would like to use his meetings with leaders of the region to give a political direction to the economic cooperation in the region as part of his Government's "Look East" policy. He noted that India's north east States — he represents Assam in the Rajya Sabha — would stand to benefit immensely from enhanced connectivity in the region.

On arrival in Bangkok, Dr. Singh attended a reception hosted by the Indian Ambassador to Thailand Leela Ponappa.

Indo-Thai tie-up suggested

By P.S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JULY 16. The possibility of cooperation between India and Thailand for research in developing anti-AIDS medicines was discussed in Bangkok today, when Sonia Gandhi, chairperson of the National Advisory Council and the Coordinating Committee of the United Progressive Alliance, called on the Thai Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra. The hour-long meeting took place shortly after the conclusion of the 15th International AIDS Conference there. Ms. Gandhi had joined the former South African Presi-

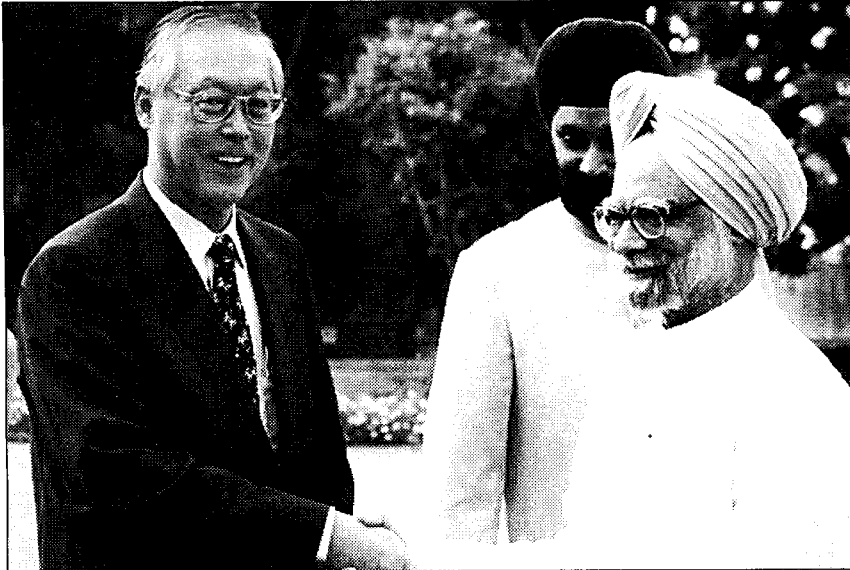
dent, Nelson Mandela, in addressing the concluding session of the conference.

Mr. Thaksin and Ms. Gandhi, an active campaigner in the global fight against AIDS, explored the possibility of India and Thailand working together for research aimed at the production of medicines to treat AIDS patients, according to official sources. The possibility of such an initiative was discussed against the general backdrop of India's latest recourse to anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment and Thailand's experience of manufacturing ARV medicines by using raw materials from India.

Working at fever pitch

DIPLOMACY

K.P. NAYAR



New frontiers

The photographs said it all. They were a study in contrast, more so since they appeared on the same day. One showed an unrepentant, far from contrite Enron founder Kenneth Lay, once "Kenny Boy" to George W. Bush, being led away in handcuffs by the FBI to hear his indictment in a court of law. Lay is perhaps the only corporate tycoon to have threatened an Indian prime minister the way heads of conglomerates in the West often threaten and arm-twist tin-pot dictators in banana republics in Africa and Latin America.

The other photograph showed a beaming Goh Chok Tong, Singapore's prime minister, as comfortable with Manmohan Singh as he was at home with Atal Bihari Vajpayee and, long ago, P.V. Narasimha Rao. When Goh steps down from prime ministership in a few months, he will do so with the satisfaction that he restored the umbilical cord that tied Singapore historically, culturally and geo-politically with India. That cord was broken in the Seventies because of the ideological and myopic policies of successive Indian governments.

No foreign leader since Nikita Khrushchev, who visited India in December 1955, has been able to excite his own people or Indians about a bilateral relationship the way Goh has mobilized Singaporeans and Indians into creating an enduring partnership between their countries. More than a decade ago, addressing his people on National Day, Goh promised an "India fever" in Singapore.

If Goh reflected on what he had done with India as his aircraft took off from Delhi to Teheran on Sunday, he would have been convinced that his achievement has been truly remarkable. What makes the turnaround in relations historic is that, more often than not, it has been made possible in spite of the Indian government, not because of it.

Yes, it is true, tiny Singapore is now the third largest foreign direct investor in India. The second place belongs to Mauritius, but it is no secret that very often there are aspects of investment from Mauritius which are conveniently overlooked and questions not asked about the source of funds from this offshore centre. So, it could be said that Singapore has the second place as far as genuine foreign direct investment in India is concerned, second only to the United States of America.

Goh stirred up an "India fever" in Singapore when India was gingerly em-

bracing economic reforms in the early Nineties. Some of his fellow-leaders in the Association of South-east Asian Nations warned Goh that he would regret the decision to turn to India to promote a whole new concept in regional economic integration. Today, some of those leaders regret that they did not join Goh.

When Goh and Rao jointly unveiled their plans to open up India for business from south-east Asia, Singapore's investment in India was next to nothing. By 2002, Singapore ranked eighth among foreign investors in India. This year's figures place it at an impressive third.

The new face of Singapore-India relations is not just about sound economics. Goh made it possible for India to find its political and strategic way back into south-east Asia without loss of face. The import of this is difficult to grasp for those who are not aware that full ASEAN membership was offered to India in the Seventies and that Indira Gandhi rejected it because she considered the emerging "Asian Tigers" to be mere puppets of Western imperialist powers.

If it were not for Goh, India would have had to wait, along with Pakistan, until this year to become a member of ASEAN. There would have been no India-ASEAN summits either, at least not as long as Mahathir Mohamad and

Suharto were in power in Malaysia and Indonesia. All this is not to say that Singapore-India relations have been a one-way street. It would be stretching credulity to argue that Singapore has not benefited from the relationship as much, if not more than India.

Kenneth Lay, by contrast, represents everything that has gone wrong with Indo-US relations, which too began a metamorphosis around the same time that India's relations with Singapore became open to change. Some may argue that Lay is an extreme example of the "Ugly American" image, immortalized by the 1958 runaway bestseller which prompted Dwight D. Eisenhower to reform US activities abroad. Notwithstanding that argument, the contrast is important because it explains a lot about why Singapore has succeeded in India while the Americans have, by and large, failed in comparison.

Lay is no longer "Kenny Boy" to Bush: he is merely "Mr Lay". On Sunday, the wife of the US vice-president, Dick Cheney, went so far as to say on CNN that she had met Lay only once, "in passing". All the same, a week after Lay's indictment, it is illuminating to recall a threatening letter that he wrote to Vajpayee.

The date on the letter is September 14, 2001, three days after the terrorists at-

tacked the Pentagon and destroyed Manhattan's twin towers. It would be reasonable to assume that someone in Lay's position would be part of the national salvage and healing operations after the attack, but not the Enron founder.

"Our experience would indicate that contracts with governmental authorities in India really do not seem to represent anything more than a starting point for a later re-negotiation, and are broken by Indian governmental authorities whenever and as often as they prove inconvenient or burdensome", Lay wrote to the prime minister. "Contract-breaking by Indian governmental authorities has become a tactical device to be used wherever and as often as commercial and political circumstances may dictate... No one should complain later if that causes severe prejudices to India's attempts to solicit foreign investment or capital."

Then, he proceeded to threaten Vajpayee with sanctions against India "There are laws that could prevent the US government from providing any aid or assistance or other things to India going forward if, in fact, they expropriate property of US companies."

The trouble is Lay is not an exception. Robert Blackwill, when he was US ambassador to India, whined about American trade flows to India being "flat as a *chapatti*" instead of doing something about it. His successor, David Mulford, was insensitive enough to ask at a farm event — one of his first public engagements after presenting credentials — that India should open up its agriculture sector, conveniently forgetting the huge subsidies that support American farmers.

It is impossible to imagine Goh or any of his ministers, his ambassador in India or even heads of Singapore conglomerates being anywhere nearly as insensitive. It is instructive that an early vehicle for Singapore's successful capital inflows into India was Parameswara Holdings, into which the city-state's government had put seed money, but it was entirely controlled by Singapore Indians. Singapore, moreover, has been patient, nudging India, but never putting pressure. Not even when Indian attitudes to business proposals have sometimes been maddeningly frustrating. Which is all the more reason to celebrate the present state of Singapore-India relations, which could easily serve as a model for bilateral engagements elsewhere.

ভারতে বিদেশি লগ্নি আনতে অনুঘটকের ভূমিকা নিতে চান গো চক টং

বাণিজ্য বাড়াতে দুই বণিকসভার সঙ্গে চুক্তি

নয়াদিল্লি, ১০ জুলাই— ভারতের সঙ্গে দ্বিপাক্ষিক আদান-প্রদান বাড়াতে আজ এ দেশের দুটি শীর্ষস্থানীয় বণিকসভার সঙ্গে চুক্তি সই করলেন সিঙ্গাপুরের প্রধানমন্ত্রী গো চক টং। এই লক্ষ্যে সিঙ্গাপুরের ইনস্টিটিউট অব সাউথ এশিয়ান স্ট্যাডিজের সঙ্গে সমঝোতাপত্র স্বাক্ষর করেছে কনফেডারেশন অব ইন্ডিয়ান ইন্ডাস্ট্রি বা সি আই আই এবং ফিকি। ভারতে বিদেশি লগ্নি বাড়াতে সিঙ্গাপুর অনুঘটকের ভূমিকা পালন করবে বলে টং এই দিন প্রতিশ্রুতি দেন।

গো চক টং জানিয়েছেন, সি আই আইয়ের সঙ্গে চুক্তির ফলে স্থাপিত হবে সিঙ্গাপুর-ইন্ডিয়া পার্টনারশিপ ফাউন্ডেশন। এর ফলে বাণিজ্যিক লেনদেনে উৎসাহ দেওয়ার পাশাপাশি চলবে ছাত্রবৃত্তি এবং সাংস্কৃতিক আদান-প্রদানও।

অন্য দিকে, ফিকি-র সঙ্গে সিঙ্গাপুরের ইনস্টিটিউট অব সাউথ এশিয়ান স্ট্যাডিজের চুক্তির লক্ষ্যও বিনিয়োগ এবং বাণিজ্য বাড়ানো। কৃষি পণ্য প্যাকেজিং, কোল্ড স্টোরেজ গড়া, পরিবহণ ইত্যাদির ব্যাপারে সিঙ্গাপুর তার কারিগরি দক্ষতা দিয়ে ভারতকে সাহায্য করতে আগ্রহী বলে জানিয়েছে। ফিকি প্রেসিডেন্ট ওয়াই কে মোদি জানিয়েছেন, সিঙ্গাপুরের ক্ষুদ্র ও মাঝারি শিল্পোদ্যোগীদের সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক স্থাপনে উদ্যোগী হবেন তাঁরা।

প্রসঙ্গত উল্লেখ্য, সিঙ্গাপুর-ইন্ডিয়া পার্টনারশিপ ফাউন্ডেশন গড়া হয়েছে আন্তর্জাতিক সমঝোতার জন্য টংকে দেওয়া ২৫ লক্ষ টাকার জওহরলাল নেহরু পুরস্কারের তহবিল দিয়ে। সমপরিমাণ অর্থ দিয়েছেন ভারতী এন্টারপ্রাইজেসের প্রধান সুনীল মিশ্রল, গোদরেজ অ্যান্ড বয়েসের জামশেদ গোদরেজ এবং সি আই আই প্রেসিডেন্ট সুনীল কান্ত মুঞ্জাল। — পি টি আই

সিঙ্গাপুরের প্রতিনিধিদের কাছে পরীক্ষা রাজ্যের

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: বিনিয়োগ টানার আগে রাজ্যে লালফিতের ফাঁস আলগা করতে হবে, গত দশকের মাঝামাঝি কলকাতায় এসে সিঙ্গাপুরের প্রধানমন্ত্রী গো চক টং পরিষ্কার ভাবেই এ কথা বলে গিয়েছিলেন। বণিকসভা সি আই আইয়ের মধ্যে দাঁড়িয়ে তিনি প্রায় হুঁশিয়ারির সুরে বলেছিলেন, কী দেশে কী রাজ্যে রাষ্ট্রের কাজের ধারা না-বদললে দ্রুত বিনিয়োগ অসম্ভব। প্রায় এক দশক পরে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে লগ্নির পরিবেশ খতিয়ে দেখতে সেই কলকাতাতেই ২৯ জন আমলার দল পাঠাচ্ছেন গো। বণিকসভা সি আই আই আয়োজিত এই সফরে মুম্বই বা চেমাইয়ের বদলে এঁরা বেছে নিয়েছেন কলকাতাকে। দিল্লি ও বাঙ্গালোরের পাশাপাশি।

দেড় দিনের এই সফরে ইনফোকম ডেভেলপমেন্ট অথরিটির কর্ণধার ট্যান চিং ই-র নেতৃত্বে সিঙ্গাপুরের আমলারা বুধবার মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্য ও নিরুপম সেনের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করবেন। রাজ্যের বিনিয়োগের চিত্র ও পরিবেশ সম্বন্ধে শিল্প সচিবের বিশদ উপস্থাপনা শুনবেন। রাতে তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি মন্ত্রীর নৈশভোজেও কাজের কথা চালাবেন।

তবে স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই শুধু সরকারি তথ্য ও ব্যাখ্যার উপরে নির্ভর করবেন না এঁরা। বেসরকারি শিল্পমহলের বক্তব্য শোনার জন্য সি আই আই প্রতিনিধিদের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করবেন। বিভিন্ন শিল্পের অবস্থা বুঝতে সংশ্লিষ্ট শিল্পে সি আই আই-এর বিশেষজ্ঞদের সঙ্গে কথা বলবেন সফরকারী আমলারা।

সিঙ্গাপুরের আমলাদের সঙ্গে বৈঠকের একটি বিশেষ গুরুত্বের কথা সি আই আই কর্তারাই রাজ্য সরকারকে স্মরণ করিয়ে দিয়েছেন। লগ্নির গন্তব্য খোঁজার প্রসঙ্গে সিঙ্গাপুরের বিনিয়োগকারীরা খুব বেশি মাত্রায় সরকারের মতামতের গুরুত্ব দেন। সরকার যদি কোনও দেশ বা রাজ্যের হয়ে সুপারিশ করে তাহলে সিঙ্গাপুরের শিল্পমহল প্রায় একযোগে সেখানে গিয়ে ভিড় জমায়। গত এক দশকে দক্ষিণ চিনে যে ভাবে তাঁরা লগ্নি করেছেন তাতে এই



শনিবার নয়াদিল্লিতে সিঙ্গাপুর-ইন্ডিয়া পার্টনারশিপ ফাউন্ডেশনের উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে সিঙ্গাপুরের প্রধানমন্ত্রী গো চক টং এবং গোদরেজ অ্যান্ড বয়েসের ম্যানেজিং ডিরেক্টর জামশেদ গোদরেজ। — এ এফ পি

মনোভাব আরও প্রকট হয়ে ওঠে বলে বণিকসভার কর্তাদের মত। ফলে এই সফরে যদি সিঙ্গাপুরের আমলাদের মনে এ রাজ্য সম্বন্ধে অনুকূল ভাবমূর্তি গড়ে ওঠে, তা হলে সে দেশের লগ্নির দেখা মিলতে পারে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে।

সি আই আই কর্তাদের আশার একটি বড় কারণ সিঙ্গাপুরের আমলাদের পরিচয়। শিল্পের বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্রের সঙ্গে যুক্ত সরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠানের কর্তব্যজ্ঞিতরা আছেন এ দলে। বণিকসভার কর্তারা জানিয়েছেন, প্রতিশ্রুতিবান আমলাদেরই এই সফরের জন্য নির্বাচন করেছে সিঙ্গাপুর সরকার। ফলে এই সফর থেকে দীর্ঘমেয়াদি ফসল তুলতে পারে এ রাজ্য।

আর সেখানেই সরকারের চ্যালেঞ্জ। এই ২৯ জন আমলার কাছে যে বার্তা যাবে তার নির্যাস পৌঁছবে গো-এর কাছে। জাতির জনক লি কুয়ান ইউয়ের কয়েক দশকের শাসন ব্রিটিশ উপনিবেশ থেকে সিঙ্গাপুরকে এক আধুনিক দেশে রূপান্তরিত করার পর গো চক টং তাকে বিশ্বের অন্যতম পছন্দের বিনিয়োগের গন্তব্যে পরিণত করেছেন। সিঙ্গাপুরের আর্থিক ভবিষ্যতের সঙ্গে চিন ও ভারতের নিবিড় যোগাযোগ যে প্রায় স্বতঃসিদ্ধ, এমন ধারণা সাম্প্রতিক কালে বিভিন্ন মঞ্চ প্রকাশ করে এসেছেন গো।

গত দশকের মাঝামাঝি কলকাতায় দাঁড়িয়ে স্থানীয় বিনিয়োগের পরিবেশ নিয়ে

তিনি যা বলেছিলেন, তার থেকে ভারত যে সংস্কারের পথে অনেক দূর এগিয়ে গিয়েছে গত নভেম্বরে ওয়ার্ল্ড ইকনমিক ফোরামে '২০২৫ সালে পূর্ব এশিয়া' শীর্ষক এক অনুষ্ঠানে তা স্বীকার করেছিলেন তিনি। তাঁর এই ধারণার সঙ্গে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ ও কলকাতার বাস্তব কতটা সঙ্গতিপূর্ণ এই আমলাদের অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে তা অবশ্যই মিলিয়ে নেবেন গো। এই পটভূমিতে দাঁড়িয়ে তাঁর পছন্দের তালিকায় স্থান পাওয়ার জন্য পশ্চিমবঙ্গকে লড়তে হবে বাঙ্গালোর ও দিল্লির সঙ্গে।

লড়তে হবে বুদ্ধবাবুদেরও। দিল্লি ও বাঙ্গালোরের তুলনায় কিছুটা 'ব্যাকবেঞ্চারের' জায়গা থেকেই।

Jet Airways, Air Sahara get landing rights in Singapore

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, JULY 10. Singapore has offered Jet Airways and Air Sahara landing rights in the country during the talks the Singapore Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, had with the Indian leadership today. At present, only Air India and Indian Airlines fly to Singapore.

At the same time, India reiterated its commitment to the offer made to the Association of South-East Asian Nations airlines during the ASEAN-India summit in Bali in October 2003 that they could operate an additional flight to New Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata and Mumbai.

A joint press statement issued after talks between the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and Mr. Goh said the two leaders reviewed the progress of negotiations for the conclusion of a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).

"Both sides attached importance to the Agreement, recognising its potential for further cementing their growing economic and commercial ties. The Prime Ministers commended the progress so far and directed their officials to work purposefully towards concluding the negotiations early," it said.

The two sides noted that bilateral interactions between the armed forces of the two countries had increased in depth and scope. "Both sides positively assessed the potential and scope for defence cooperation between the two countries covering bilateral exercises, training arrangements, professional and high level exchanges and visits and collaboration in defence technology research. They saw the consolidation of defence ties as a natural evolution of their excellent political understanding. These ties would be a factor for peace and stability in the region."

(Singaporean F-16s, based in France, will be participating in a joint exercise with the Indian Air Force in Gwalior in October this year, senior officials said.)

Dr. Singh and Mr. Goh also noted their common concerns and the identity of views on the threat to open and democratic societies from terrorism and extremist violence. "They called for effective international cooperation to combat terrorism and deny sanctuaries to terrorist outfits."

Referring to the growing consultation and cooperation in this area, the Prime Ministers welcomed the institution-



The Singapore Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, calling on the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, at his residence in New Delhi on Saturday. — Photo: V.V. Krishnan

alisation of the bilateral Joint Working Group on Intelligence Cooperation on Combating Terrorism and Transnational Organised Crime and the finalisation of the bilateral Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty on Criminal Matters. "They hoped that the Treaty would come in-

to effect shortly and further enhance bilateral cooperation in the area of law enforcement."

Both sides welcomed Mr. Goh's initiative, with the support of the Singapore Business Federation and the Confederation of Indian Industry, to set up the Singapore-India Part-

nership Foundation to promote exchanges between the two countries. "They expressed hope that this Foundation would play an important catalytic role in promoting the further development of Singapore-India bilateral relations."

India, Singapore agree to combat terror together

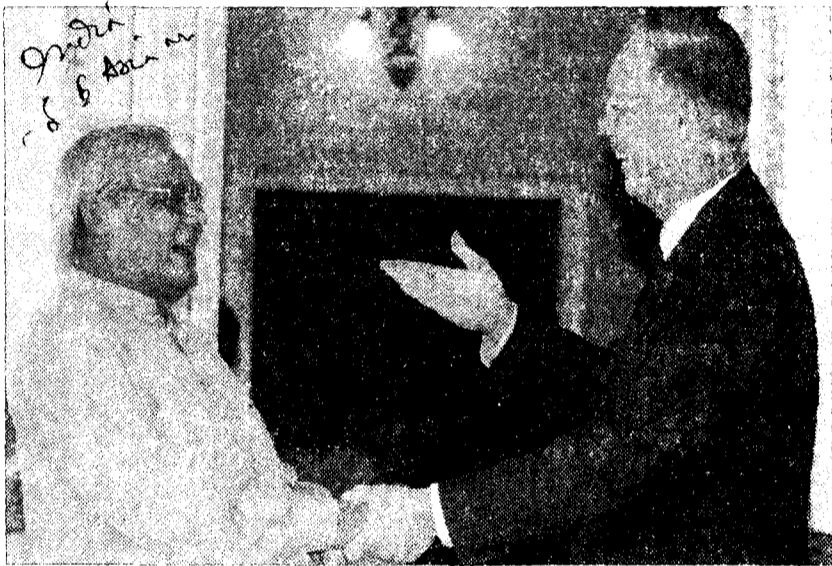
11/7
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, July 10. — Sharing concerns over threats from terrorism and extremist violence to open and democratic societies, India and Singapore today called for "effective" international cooperation to combat this menace and deny sanctuaries to terrorist outfits.

As a step in this direction, the two sides welcomed institutionalisation of the bilateral Joint Working Group on Intelligence Cooperation on Combating Terrorism and Transnational Organised Crime.

A joint statement issued after official level talks between Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and his visiting Singaporean counterpart Mr Goh Chok Tong said the two sides hoped that the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty on Criminal Matters firmed up by them would come into effect shortly and further enhance bilateral cooperation in the area of law enforcement.

Mr Goh, who is on a four-day visit, called on President APJ Abdul Kalam and Vice President Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat besides having meetings with Congress President Mrs Sonia Gandhi, external affairs minister Mr K Natwar Singh, commerce and industry minister Mr Kamal Nath and Leader of



Mr Goh Chok Tong with Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee in New Delhi on Saturday. — AFP

Opposition Mr LK Advani. This morning he also had a meeting with former Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee.

The visiting dignitary was yesterday conferred the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding by President Kalam. Mr Goh paid glowing tributes to Nehru, whom he described as an inspiration to the generation that

had fought to free themselves from colonial rule. Both sides agreed that their strategic and economic interests were convergent. On its part, India expressed appreciation for Singapore's very positive and constructive role in enhancing New Delhi's interaction with Asean. They expressed "great satisfaction" at the strengthening and diversification of bilateral relations.

India-Thailand free trade accord from September 1

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, JULY 9. The India-Thailand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) will come into force from September 1, 2004, the Thai Minister for Science and Technology, Korn Thapparansi, said here today at a meeting organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

Eightytwo of the 84 items identified in the "early harvest scheme" of the FTA, signed in October last, will be covered by the agreement.

Two chemical items have been removed from the list, according to Thai officials.

"India has been quite flexible in the matter of value addition or local content," said the Thailand Vice-Minister of Commerce, Panpree Bahiddha Nukara.

The identified items would enjoy a 50 per cent concessional tariff over normal one in both countries from this September 1, to September 1, 2005, 75 per cent concessional tariff till September 2006 and to nil duty thereafter, Mr. Nukara said.

পূর্বের দিকে মন দিক ভারত, চায় সিঙ্গাপুর

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৯ জুলাই: ভারত যাতে তার পূর্ব দিকের প্রতিবেশীদের প্রতি মনোযোগ বাড়ায়, তার জন্য আবেদন জানালেন সিঙ্গাপুরের প্রধানমন্ত্রী গো চক টং। আজ থেকে তাঁর তিন দিনের ভারত সফর শুরু করার পরে, টং ভারতের সঙ্গে বাণিজ্য-সহ বিভিন্ন দিকে সম্পর্ক বাড়ানোর কথা বলার পাশাপাশি ভারতকেও পূর্ব দিকে তাকানোর কথাও বলেছেন। টংয়ের কথায়, “ভারতের পক্ষে রাজনৈতিক ও কৌশলগত বিষয়গুলিতে পূর্ব দিকে তাকানো আরও দরকারি। সিঙ্গাপুর ও আসিয়ান দেশগুলির সঙ্গে অর্থনৈতিক সম্পর্ক মজবুত করুক ভারত।” অন্যদিকে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ জানিয়েছেন, বিদেশনীতিতে কোনও পরিবর্তনের প্রয়োজন হলে, তা সার্বিক ঐকমত্যের ভিত্তিতেই হবে।

ভারত অবশ্য গত কয়েক বছর যাবৎই পূর্ব-এশিয়ার দেশগুলির সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক বাড়াতে আগ্রহী। আসিয়ান-সহ বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্রে ভারত নিজেদের এই ইচ্ছার কথা বারবার প্রকাশ করে এসেছে। পাকিস্তান বা আফগানিস্তানের মতো পশ্চিম দিকের দেশগুলির প্রতি স্বাভাবিক কারণেই ভারত বরাবর গুরুত্ব আরোপ করে এসেছে। কিন্তু তার পাশাপাশি নতুন ‘মিত্র-কেন্দ্র’ হিসাবে দিল্লির লক্ষ্য এখন পূর্ব-এশিয়া। চিনের সঙ্গে ভারত যেমন বরফ গলাতে নতুন করে উদ্যোগী, তেমনি পূর্ব-এশিয়ার অন্য প্রতিবেশী দেশগুলির সঙ্গেও সম্পর্ক সুদৃঢ় করার প্রক্রিয়া গত সরকারের আমল থেকেই বাড়তি গতি পেয়েছিল। বর্তমানে ভারত ও সিঙ্গাপুর নিজেদের মধ্যে একটি মুক্ত বাণিজ্য চুক্তি তৈরি করতে চলেছে। দুই দেশের মধ্যে একটি সার্বিক অর্থনৈতিক চুক্তিও স্বাক্ষরিত হবে।

এশিয়ার দেশগুলির মধ্যে সিঙ্গাপুরের সঙ্গে দিল্লির ব্যবসায়িক সম্পর্ক অনেক দিন ধরেই ভাল। বস্তুত, আসিয়ান দেশগুলির মধ্যে সিঙ্গাপুরের সঙ্গে ভারতের আর্থিক লেনদেন সবচেয়ে বেশি। এই ভিত্তির উপরে দাঁড়িয়েই এখন রাজনৈতিক এবং কৌশলগত ক্ষেত্রে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ক জোরদার করার কথা বলেছেন টং। তাঁর কথায়, “ভারত থেকে আমাদের দেশে বিনিয়োগ বাড়ুক, এটাই আমরা চাই।”

কেবল আবেদনই নয়, সিঙ্গাপুর যে ভারত থেকে ব্যবসা বাড়াতে এখনই তৎপর, তার প্রমাণ প্রধানমন্ত্রীর এই সফরেই রয়েছে। টংয়ের সঙ্গে এসেছেন সিঙ্গাপুরের শিক্ষামহলের একটি বড় প্রতিনিধি দল। কেন্দ্রে নতুন সরকার আসার পরে সিঙ্গাপুরের প্রধানমন্ত্রীই প্রথম রাষ্ট্রপ্রধান হিসাবে ভারত সফরে এলেন। এর আগেও টং চারবার ভারত সফরে এসেছেন। তাই তাঁর কথায়, “এটা আমার কাছে ব্যক্তিগত সম্পর্কও ঝালিয়ে নেওয়ার সফর।” আজ টং রাষ্ট্রপতি এ পি জে আব্দুল কালাম, প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ, স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল, সনিয়া গান্ধী প্রমুখের সঙ্গে সাক্ষাৎ করেছেন। আগামিকাল প্রতিনিধি দল স্তরের বৈঠক হবে দুই দেশের মধ্যে। আরও দু’দিন ভারতে থাকবেন টং।

10 JUL 2004

ANABAZAR PATILKA

Nehru Award conferred on Goh

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, JULY 9. The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, conferred the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding on the Singapore Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan this evening. The award carries a trophy, citation and a purse of Rs. 25 lakhs.

Mr. Goh, who arrived in the capital on Thursday night, had a full schedule of meetings today. He called on the President and the Vice-President, B.S. Shekhawat, and held talks with the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. He also met the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, and the Leader of the

Opposition, L.K. Advani. The Jawaharlal Nehru Award, since its inception in 1965, has been given to Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Yehudi Menuhin, Mother Teresa, Indira Gandhi, Kenneth Kaunda, Yasser Arafat, Aung San Suu Kyi, Mahathir Mohamed and Helmut Kohl, among others.

In his address at the award function, Mr. Kalam said that Mr. Goh, with his leadership and vision, had come to occupy a leading place among the statesmen of Asia. "At the same time, we remember and pay our respects to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of free India ..."

The President said Mr. Goh

had guided the destiny of Singapore and its people for a decade and a half.

"Under your illustrious leadership, Singapore has scripted a new way of doing things designed for creating an enterprising and innovative society. The results are there for all to see in the form of the Singapore dream."

Within the short span of a generation, Singapore had emerged as a developed nation — a vision articulated by the founder of independent Singapore — Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

"This is particularly important when it was thought in 1965 that an independent Singapore was not viable and your predecessor had an unenviable task to make it work and you created a nation out of peoples of origin mostly from China, India, Malaysia and other parts of Asia. Our greetings to you and the people of Singapore," Mr. Kalam said.

The President applauded Mr. Goh's statement last year that India should be part of a larger Asian Economic Community — comprising the 10 nations of the

Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China, Japan and South Korea. How can we create an Asian Union just like the European Union? If a war-torn Europe could come together, why couldn't Asia do the same?"

In his acceptance speech, Mr. Goh said that Nehru was a cosmopolitan, a nationalist and an intellectual giant. "Most of all, he was an inspiration to the generation that had fought to free themselves from colonial rule."

Stating that he was deeply honoured to be conferred with the Award, Mr. Goh said that along with Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru taught Asians to stand up for their rights, and rediscover their heritage, dignity and self-worth.

"Unlike many who turned to revolutionary violence, Nehru walked the more difficult path of conciliation and peace towards independence, and made the difference. Nehru persevered and triumphed."

"He made it easy for many of us living in colonies to follow in his footsteps, along the path he created," the visiting Prime

Minister said.

"Secure in his own Indian identity and roots, Nehru was able to enjoy the fruits of many cultures and to learn from them. In many ways, Singapore seeks to do the same — combining the best of Western culture with our Asian roots and values."

Mr. Goh, who announced that he would be donating the prize money of Rs. 25 lakhs to the Singapore-India Foundation, being launched on Saturday, felt that free trade agreements were not just economic, but strategic agreements.

In a reference to the Free Trade Agreements being negotiated between India and Singapore as well as India and the ASEAN, Mr. Goh said these, in time, would form the stepping-stones for an Asian economic community.

Hinting at his impending retirement from the post of Prime Minister, Mr. Goh said,

"This is my long-term vision for Asia, even though I may not be around — politically anyway — to see it come to fruition," Mr. Goh said.

ভারত-মায়ানমার দ্বিতীয় বাণিজ্যপথ আজ থেকে

সাঁক রিপোর্টার, গুয়াহাটি, ২৯ জানুয়ারি— ভারত ও মায়ানমারের মধ্যে আগামী কাল আরও একটি বাণিজ্যপথ চালু হচ্ছে। এটি মায়ানমারের সঙ্গে উত্তর-পূর্ব ভারতে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার স্বীকৃত দ্বিতীয় বাণিজ্যপথ। দু'দেশেরই বক্তব্য, প্রস্তাবিত ফটকটি চালু হলে সীমান্তবর্তী অঞ্চলের বাণিজ্য-সম্পর্ক অনেকটাই ঘনিষ্ঠ হবে। ভারতে বিশেষ ভাবে উপকৃত হবে মিজোরাম এবং অসমের বরাক উপত্যকা।

মিজোরামের সীমান্তবর্তী জোখওয়াথায় বেশ কিছু কাল আগেই সরকার স্বীকৃত বাণিজ্যপথ চালু করার দাবি উঠেছিল। মিজোরাম সরকার এটির অনুমোদন দিলেও তা মায়ানমার সরকারের স্বীকৃতির অপেক্ষায় ছিল। এ নিয়ে দু'দেশের কেন্দ্রীয় বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রকের শীর্ষ প্রতিনিধিদের একাধিক বৈঠকও হয়। মিজোরামের বাণিজ্য দফতরের এক পদস্থ অফিসার জানান, ১৯৯৫ সালে মণিপুরের মোড়েতে মায়ানমারের সঙ্গে উত্তর-পূর্ব ভারতের প্রথম সরকার স্বীকৃত বাণিজ্যপথ চালু হয়। তাতে দু'দেশের, বিশেষত সীমান্ত-সংলগ্ন অঞ্চলের বাসিন্দাদের উপকার হয়। এই ধরনের পথ চালু না-হলে সীমান্তে চোরচালান বেড়ে

চলছিল। তাতে, দু'দেশই মার খাচ্ছিল শুধু আদায়ের ক্ষেত্রে। এ ক্ষেত্রে শুধুরে হার দেশের অন্য স্থান থেকে পাঠানো সমাগোত্রীয় হারের চেয়ে কম হবে।

মায়ানমারে টোকোর ঠিক মুখে যেখানে প্রস্তাবিত আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্য-ফটকটি হবে, সেটি মিজোরামের চ্যাপ্পাই শহরের কাছে ডিয়াউ নদীর ধারে জোখওয়াথায়। আগামী কাল সেখানকার উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে মায়ানমারের বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী ব্রিসেডিয়ার জেনারেল পিয়াই সোন, মিজোরামের বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী আইছিন্দা এবং কেন্দ্রীয় বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রকের একাধিক পদস্থ আমলার থাকার কথা।

সীমান্তে এই বাণিজ্যকেন্দ্রে তৈরির জন্য কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার ৮ কোটি টাকা বরাদ্দ করেছে। ফটকটি তার একটি অংশ। সেখানে বেশ কিছু শো-রুম, গুদাম, টেলিফোন এক্সচেঞ্জ, থানা, শুল্ক কেন্দ্র, সীমান্তরক্ষীবাহিনীর ফাঁড়ি তৈরি হবে। উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে রাজ্যের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী জোরামথাঙ্গার হাজির থাকার কথা ছিল। কিন্তু আজ বিকেলে তাঁর সচিবালয় থেকে জানা যায়, মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বিশেষ কাজে দিল্লিতে আটকে পড়ায় অনুষ্ঠানে থাকতে পারছেন না।

মিজোরামের আদা, আনারস, কমলালেবু এবং হস্তশিল্পের যথেষ্ট চাহিদা আছে মায়ানমারে। অন্য দিকে, মিজোরামে মায়ানমারের বৈদ্যুতিন সামগ্রী, ভোগ্যপণ্য, রক্ত, জুতা, চাল প্রভৃতির চাহিদা বেশি। আন্তর্জাতিক বিধি এবং প্রথা অনুযায়ী সীমান্তের দু'পাশে ১০ কিলোমিটার পর্যন্ত সাধারণ মানুষ যাতায়াত করতে পারবেন। প্রস্তাবিত স্বীকৃত ফটকটির ফলে কেবল এই অঞ্চলের বাসিন্দারাই নন, অসমের বরাক উপত্যকার একাংশের মানুষও সহজে এবং অপেক্ষাকৃত সুলভে নির্দিষ্ট কিছু জিনিস পাবেন।

অসমের শিল্প ও বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী ভুবনেশ্বর কলিতা বলেন, উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলে সীমান্তবর্তী আরও কিছু জায়গায় এই ধরনের স্বীকৃত বাণিজ্যপথ খোলার কথা হচ্ছে। এতে অসম ও সংলগ্ন অঞ্চলের বিভিন্ন ফলন বা উৎপাদিত নানা জিনিস বিক্রি করার বাড়তি সুবিধা পাওয়া যাবে। শীঘ্রই মায়ানমারের সীমান্তবর্তী মোড়েতে একটি বাণিজ্যমেলা হবে। এই প্রথম উত্তর-পূর্ব ভারতে তৈরি নানা ধরনের ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং সামগ্রী ওখানকার মেলায় এ ভাবে সেখানোর সুযোগ পাওয়া যাচ্ছে। মণিপুর ও অসমের কাছ থেকে মায়ানমার আরও বেশি ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং সামগ্রী কিনতে আগ্রহী বলে তিনি জানান।

Jan 10 2004

'Economic, defence cooperation between India, Singapore vital'

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JAN. 10. The Singapore Deputy Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, has identified the proposed comprehensive economic cooperation agreement (CECA) and "defence cooperation" as major initiatives in the city state's increasingly dynamic relationship with India.

In an interview to *The Hindu* at "The Treasury" building here, ahead of his 10-day visit to India from tonight, Mr. Lee said the CECA "is a very big item" on the bilateral agenda. "It needs hard decisions on both sides and we should focus on it and get a good CECA." Several rounds of negotiations have already taken place, and the current effort is to clinch the accord in time for the planned visit to India by the Singapore Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, later this year.

Responding to questions on the defence cooperation accord which India and Singapore recently entered into, Mr. Lee indicated his country's interest in seeking Army-related training space in India. He also drew attention to the intensity of the ongoing naval cooperation between the two countries. "We

are such a small country [that] every [Army] training area we can find is valuable to us," he noted about India, in an obvious reference to Singapore's existing arrangements of this kind with the U.S.

On Singapore's political ties with India, Mr. Lee was emphatic that "on terrorism, we see quite similarly, eye to eye." They are indeed engaged in serious anti-terror dialogue. Asked about the ongoing discussions for an extradition treaty and a mutual legal assistance pact, he said these "are certainly possibilities." However, Singapore's "mutual legal assistance treaty legislation is relatively new", while an existing "Commonwealth framework" already "provides a mechanism for extradition."

Fielding questions on the wider implications of the recent nabbing here of two Singapore Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members who had gone to terrorist camps in Karachi, Mr. Lee said: "They were involved with the LeT, the Kashmir group.... We have good cooperation with the Pakistani Government. That is how we picked up the guys." About the city state's proactive anti-terror campaign since 2001, he said: "Within Shga-



Lee Hsien Loong

pore, I think that we have disrupted the JI activities, but, within the region, we are not confident."

Pressed to disclose Singapore's terror-watch findings about Pakistan, he said "it is part of the landscape and one of the places where things have previously happened." Singapore "will continue to watch what is happening [in Pakistan] while monitoring the whole world for anti-terror purposes, but "our pre-occupation is our own region [South East Asia]," Mr. Lee said. The Pakis-

tan factor in terror matters "is not the focus of my visit [to India]" at this time, he added. Asked whether terrorism would at all figure in his prospective talks with the Indian leaders, he said: "Yes, of course."

On the economic dimension of his visit to India, he said: "It [the Indian economy] is on the move, there is a tremendous momentum... A certain confidence and resolve is there across the board in the country, particularly in the south. I am hoping to see it for myself." Mr. Lee, who has been designated by Mr. Goh as his successor for the Prime Minister's post, begins his tour in Bangalore and will visit New Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Chennai.

Characterising Singapore as a "high-income developing country" and "not a developed state," Mr. Lee, who is also the Finance Minister, explained the rationale of an economic engagement with India in the following terms: "Well, you have a market, you have skilled manpower and we would like to do business. We can always do business elsewhere too. But India is a huge opportunity, and it will be foolish of us not to be interested in it.... If the [proposed] CECA is a good deal,

there will be many more investments, ... because the framework will be there, the government-to-government linkages will be established [in order] that if there are difficulties which come up, there is some place to run to for help."

Mr. Lee argued for private-sector initiative to make a success of the proposed CECA and noted that "they [Singapore companies] are hungry [for investment opportunities in India]." He said: "To make a CECA work, there have to be significant adjustments made on both sides. If it is just *status quo plus*, it is not really worth doing.... I am sure we will have one [CECA]. The challenge is to have a good one."

On a central aspect of Singapore's overall foreign policy, Mr. Lee said the planned strategic accord with the U.S. "is a framework to bring together many of the things which we have been doing with the Americans, to put some coherence." On strategic issues such as anti-terror cooperation, involving Singapore as a front-line state without that label, and the importance of stability in East Asia, the two "see things, eye to eye, with very similar perspectives," he said.