

India, Uzbekistan agree to fight terrorism

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 5. India and Uzbekistan today agreed to fight terrorism on a "long term and sustained" basis and stated that international terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, constituted one of the "most serious threats" to peace and security.

This formulation was contained in a joint statement issued after talks between the visiting Uzbek President, Islam Abduganievich Karimov, and the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, at Hyderabad House.

Condemning in the "strongest terms" all acts of terrorism, India and Uzbekistan also expressed their support to the efforts of the Afghanistan Government to build a "strong, united, prosperous and independent" country.

"The geographical loca-

tion and traditional links with Afghanistan ... Uzbekistan and ... India together with their economic and technical potential, provide possibilities for cooperation in the reconstruction of Afghanistan," the statement said.

India and Uzbekistan also underlined the importance of the early realisation of the international trans-Afghanistan transport corridor. "It was noted that the Zaranj-Delaram road stretch, being built by India in Afghanistan, will constitute a key segment of the route linking Uzbekistan to the Chahbahar port in Iran."

Uzbekistan also supported the entry of India into the United Nations' Security Council as a permanent member. "The sides stressed the urgent need for reforms of the structure of the United Nations ... so as to enhance its efficacy in dealing with the contemporary challenges and making

it more reflective of the current geo-political and economic realities."

The Defence Ministers of two countries signed an agreement on "cooperation in military and military-technical areas", which will entail joint exercises, exchange of expertise, development, production, repair of equipment and training. Three other agreements in the fields of education, culture and cooperation in the small-scale sector were also signed between the two Governments.

The External Affairs Ministry spokesman told presspersons this evening that Uzbekistan was ready to have the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) and the Gas Authority of India Ltd. (GAIL) working in the gas and petroleum sector.

The two countries had also agreed to set up an India-Uzbek centre for information technology in Tashkent.

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