

## Contract for world's first floating N-plant signed in Russia

DADAN UPADHYAY  
MOSCOW, JUNE 14

ROSENERGOATOM, the government institution which manages all Russian nuclear power plants, today signed a contract with defence enterprise Shevmash shipyard on building world's first floating nuclear power plant (NPP).

The unique project which is expected to supply much-needed energy to the country's remotest eastern regions, including Arkhangelsk, Chukotka and Kamchatka, is scheduled to begin construction next year.

The floating NPP is expected to cost about \$337 million and will be commissioned in October 2010 to supply

power and heat to Shevmash, which won the tender in May to build the NPP.

In addition to supplying Russia's polar north with comparatively cheaper energy, the floating NPPs would be put to a quite different use in warmer latitudes.

The same nuclear power used to provide power could also help desalinate sea-water if a project currently being developed by Malaya Energetika company and Canadian company Candesa succeeds.

The head of the Federal Nuclear Power Agency Sergei Kiriyeenko told reporters that Russia possessed "unique experience on using small- and medium-power NPP reactors".

13 JUN 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

# Russia and Turkey engage the Muslim world

M.K. Bhadrakumar

**A**RIEL SHARON in his memoirs described water as "a stark issue of life and death." According to Mr. Sharon, while the world would generally think that the Six Day War began on June 5 1967, in actuality war began two-and-a-half years prior to that date — on the day Israel decided to act against the diversion of the Jordan River.

Therefore, when Turkey and Israel signed an agreement on a Peace Water Project in March 2004, involving the shipment of 50 million cubic metres of water annually over a 20-year period from Turkey's Manavgat river, it spoke volumes about the strategic partnership between the two countries.

A terse announcement by the Israeli Foreign Ministry recently said the agreement had been abrogated as the project was "no longer feasible" due to cost escalation. It draws attention to the phenomenal change in Turkish-Israeli relations and in the co-relation of forces in the region as a whole since the Iraq war began.

A profound shift is apparent in Turkey's foreign policy orientation toward the region stretching from Iran to the Levant — a region that bore the imprint of the power and the glory of the Ottoman Empire but on which modern Turkey brusquely turned its back in 1923 with a resolve never to get entangled with it ever again.

Turkey is "re-engaging" the region. This huge paradigm shift can be viewed in different ways. We in India might awkwardly whisper that it amounted to Ankara "communalising" its foreign policy. But its striking similarity with an equally dramatic shift in the Russian policy toward the Muslim world may prompt us to be thoughtful.

Certainly, one has to look at it at some point in secular terms as an assertion of multipolarity in world affairs. It challenges U.S. hegemony — without being confrontational. It is of course permeated with "Eurasianism." But, most importantly, it connotes a certain willingness to pursue an "independent foreign policy."

Great Game watchers may see here a fascinating spectacle of two great historical powers,

The two powers, archrivals for centuries in the vast region stretching from the Balkans to the Caucasus, are responding with agility to the complex Anglo-American manoeuvring in their backyard.

which have been perennial archrivals for centuries in the vast region stretching from the Balkans to the Caucasus, responding with agility to the complex Anglo-American manoeuvrings in their backyard.

In Turkey's case, it can be related to domestic politics. But then a good foreign policy is an extension of national politics. Turkey has a ruling party with a pronounced religious disposition, which is heading toward election in 2007 and will be sensitive about the national opinion. And, the national mood is disgust and horror at the carnage in neighbouring Iraq, following the American invasion.

Turkish opinion suspects the Americans do not have an "exit strategy" in Iraq because no exit is intended; that the Anglo-American strategy is to create a New Middle East that enables the U.S. to control the oil, weapons, and money in the region.

Turkey fears that if Iraq fragments, Kurdish nationalism may spill over. Turkey is a country where memories are vivid, where people remember their history. The current regional situation is comparable to the tumultuous 1914-1923 period when Turkey ended up becoming a victim of the vaulting ambitions of powerful external players and was dismembered.

The shift in the Turkish thinking appeared in its outlook toward the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). After maintaining a careful distance from the OIC since its inception, Turkey sought the post of Secretary-General of that body. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan attended an Arab League summit for the first time as a "permanent guest." On his way back from the summit meeting at Khartoum, he made a

symbolic visit to the OIC headquarters at Jeddah.

Turkey came under relentless American pressure on the Iran nuclear issue. But, to quote the prominent Turkish columnist Sami Cohen, "in the final analysis, Turkey's views are different from the West's and closer to Russia's." Turkey opposes any use of force or "regime change" in Teheran and Damascus. In a demonstrative way, it warmed up its ties with these besieged neighbouring countries.

The leading daily *Hurriyet* quoted Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul: "The Israelis say they don't have a nuclear programme. But people were saying 25-30 years back that Israel had a nuclear programme. If Iran's nuclear programme is dangerous, Israel's is dangerous too. All countries should be open to the U.N. inspections."

Turkey must have one of the few Foreign Ministers with the moral courage to speak out against the U.S.' double standards. Again, a Hamas delegation led by Khaled Mashaal visited Ankara on February 16. This was immediately after Mr. Mashaal's visit to Teheran.

Israel and the Israeli lobby in the U.S. reacted harshly but Turkey held its ground. The Turkish media reported on the likelihood of visits by the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad and the Iraqi radical Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr to Turkey.

Equally so, the Muslim world has become a major arena of Russian foreign policy. Russia obtained the observer status in the OIC; Soviet era ties with Syria and Egypt were revived; Russian-Saudi mutual understanding was taken to unprecedented levels; Russia established links

with the Arab League and Hamas; and, all this while crafting a highly nuanced policy on the Iran nuclear issue despite sustained American blackmail.

Vladimir Putin's message to the Arab League summit meeting at Khartoum on March 28 highlighted how much Moscow would reach out to harmonise its stance on various regional issues with the countries of the Arab Middle East. He said: "I am well aware that the heads of state and peoples of the Arab world, and in other Muslim states, share Russia's and the international community's growing concern with regard to the danger resulting from new divisions among the international community. It is our deep conviction that the time has come to act, and to act together, under the auspices of the United Nations as a key player. As the events of the last few years in the Middle East have shown, unilateral actions do not resolve problems, and they even aggravate them. Russia, a multi-confessional country that has recently received observer status at the Organisation of Islamic Conference, has firm intentions to make significant contribution to this teamwork."

## Putin calls for consensual approaches

In an implicit criticism of the U.S.' hegemonic policies in the region, Mr. Putin called for "consensual approaches" to resolve the region's problems. He asserted that concerning the social, economic and political issues of the modernisation of the Arab world, the initiatives must rest solely with the countries of the region, "the experience and traditions of the people living here, and in the spirit of a partnership between civilisations."

Mr. Putin underlined: "Events should not be rushed in an artificial way, nor should outside pressure be applied." He said what is presently taking place today is a cause of concern, as it has a "negative effect on international affairs in general", as it is increasingly taking on an "inter-civilisational aspect."

In an article titled "Russia in Global Politics" featured in the daily *Moskovkiye Novosti* on March 3, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was explicit that the shift in the Russian approach to the problems of the Muslim world has been necessitated by the current international situation characterised by the U.S.' hegemonic policies.

He said: "Contemporary international relations are difficult to grasp unless you consider that they are in transition ... certain partners of ours would like to secure their dominance in any new world order ... Russia cannot cooperate on the basis of such a worldview. Our criteria for cooperation in international affairs are uniform for all our partners, including the C.I.S. countries, China and India, the U.S. and Europe ... They are complete equality and mutual engagement ... This is one of the basic distinctions in the foreign policy philosophy of Moscow and the approach of some Western capitals ... Russia cannot be on the side of a narrow, blindfolded view of things ... narrow postulates like "those who are not with us are against us... Professionals who study Russia or are involved in policy making cannot but see that it will be naive to expect us to be content in the world with the role of one being led."

With specific reference to the Muslim world (and while discussing the Iran and Iraq issues), Mr. Lavrov asserted: "Russia does not intend to take the position of a detached onlooker ... Russia will not let anybody set it at loggerheads with the Islamic world ... Russia cannot and will not play the role of a "frontline state" in a new Cold War — one among civilisations."

Moscow has since constituted a new forum with Muslim countries — "Russia-Islamic World Strategic Vision Group." It held its first session in Moscow on March 27-28, attended by delegates from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Central Asian states, Indonesia, etc. Mr. Putin greeted the delegates. Significantly, the statesman who presided at the meet was former Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov, renowned orientalist who played a key role in formulating the Soviet Union's ties with the Muslim world during the Cold War years.

## CARTOONSCAPE



**BHARAT BHUSHAN**

**New Delhi, April 3:** After having supplied uranium fuel for the Tarapur atomic energy plant defying the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Russians are quickly moving into position. They are sniffing for future orders for nuclear power plants from India.

In an indication of Russia stepping up its interest to position itself as a future supplier of additional nuclear

power reactors, the chief of Rosatom (Federal Nuclear Energy Agency), Sergei Kirienko, is scheduled to arrive in India on April 7.

Referred to as "Mr High Tech" in the Russian media, Kirienko is a liberal and has the reputation of being a good manager.

In the immediate future, Russia expects to get the orders for adding four more units — of 1000 mw each — to the Kudankulam atomic power plant in Tamil Nadu.

This, the Russians believe, can happen once the doors for civilian nuclear co-operation with India are opened by the Nuclear Suppliers Group, made of countries that are entitled to sell technology and equipment to produce nuclear power.

Although that may take some time, Kirienko will visit Kudankulam on April 8. Kirienko, a former Prime Minister and a trusted lieutenant of President Vladimir Putin, was appointed the head of

Rosatom in November 2005.

Kirienko was brought in to give a concrete shape to Russia's plans of expanding its civilian nuclear sector. Nuclear energy supplies 17 per cent of all electricity in Russia and this is expected to increase to 25 per cent by 2025.

Anil Kakodkar, the chairman of the Department of Atomic Energy, will accompany Kirienko to Kudankulam. This will be the first time a Russian atomic energy chief

will be visiting the site which already has two power generating units of 1000 mw each supplied by Russia. Both are under international safeguards.

Four more nuclear power reactors are planned to be built at the Kudankulam site which has already been cleared for a total of six units of 1000 mw each. Since Russia is building two units, it expects that it will be approached for putting up the additional four units also.

According to reliable sources, Russia has larger ambitions of doing business in India in the nuclear sector but will concentrate on Kudankulam for the moment.

The Russians believe they are in an advantageous position there as the Department of Atomic Energy may not want more than one country to work at this site.

India is also looking at Russia as a facilitator — if not a provider — of uranium supplies for its future needs. Be-

cause of its large civilian nuclear energy programme, Russia is itself looking for securing future sources of uranium. However, it can also supply uranium ore to India should a country like Australia, for example, does not.

Kazakhstan is the biggest source of uranium in the region and the Russians have already moved in to tie up supplies from there and even Uzbekistan which also has deposits.

# Russia in nuclear business rush

# Russia unsure whether Iran is a threat

AGENCIES

MOSCOW, MAY 5

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Friday Moscow has yet to decide on whether Iran should be considered a threat, saying it would be guided by UN nuclear experts on the issue. He was responding to remarks from his Iranian counterpart, Manouchehr Mottaki, that Russia and China "had officially told us... (of) their opposition to sanctions and military attacks" against Tehran.

"We have made no such announcements. In such an important and serious area like nuclear non-proliferation, we can make a decision only



Russian Foreign Minister  
Sergei Lavrov

based on the opinions of experts," Lavrov told reporters.

"The inspections that have been held in Iran do not allow us to conclude that Iran has the technology to create weapons of mass destruction. But on the

other hand, these inspections do not allow us to make the opposite conclusion."

He spoke a day after discussion started between the permanent five members of the UN Security Council over a resolution demanding Iran curb its nuclear ambitions or face "further measures." Britain, France and Germany, which are sponsoring the Council resolution, want it adopted by Monday and were due to meet again on Friday to push the case forward.

Meanwhile, speaking at a conference in the Azeri capital Baku, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad once again declared Iran's commitment to its uranium

enrichment programme: "We are set on continuing our path to industrial production of nuclear fuel for our nuclear power stations in line with international regulations and under IAEA supervision."

In another development, the Iranian embassy in Moscow said Russia's proposal to enrich uranium for Iran on Russian territory remains on the negotiating table.

Tehran supports any approach that "takes into consideration its right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, including the right to enrich uranium," the embassy said in a statement dated Wednesday but made available to the media today.

INDIAN EXPRESS

06 MAY 2006

# Russia plays China energy card

The Kremlin is sending a strong signal to both Europe and Japan that they will have to compete with China.

Vladimir Radyuhin

RUSSIA HAS made a new move to assert itself as a global energy broker and make other countries play by its rules. On a visit to China this week, President Vladimir Putin pledged to build two natural gas pipelines to China, as well as jointly develop Russian offshore gas fields. The two proposed gas pipelines would deliver 60 billion to 80 billion cubic metres of Russian gas to China a year, Mr. Putin said in Beijing. He also confirmed Russia's promise to build a diversion to China from a proposed oil pipeline from eastern Siberia to the Pacific coast.

In their joint declaration, Mr. Putin and Chinese President Hu Jintao described the plans as "strategic diversification in the energy sphere." So far, Russian energy exports have been mainly to Europe.

The Kremlin's Chinese projects are sending a strong signal to both Europe and Japan that they will have to compete for Russian energy resources with China. Even though Russian officials said the new pipelines would not interfere with Moscow's other energy export commitments, Europe and Japan have every reason to feel worried. The planned volumes of oil and gas deliveries to China may stretch Russia's available resources to the limit.

Half of the annual gas supplies Mr. Putin has promised China — 30 billion to 40 billion cubic metres — will come from western Siberia, which accounts for the bulk of Russian gas production today. Output in western Siberia's ageing gas fields is expected to fall from about 500 billion cubic metres today to 300 billion cubic metres by 2015. Meanwhile, Europe's demand for Russian gas over



**STRATEGIC DIVERSIFICATION:** China's President Hu Jintao and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Beijing on Wednesday. — PHOTO: AP

the same period is projected to grow from the current 140 billion to at least 200 billion cubic metres. Domestic gas consumption in Russia is also set to grow.

In this situation, Russian promises to China put Moscow in a strong bargaining position vis-à-vis Europe. Following Russia's gas price war with Ukraine earlier this year, the European Union stepped up pressure on Moscow to open up its gas market to Western companies and let them buy energy resources directly from Central Asia, rather than from Russia. EU calls for diversifying Europe's energy sources away from Russia are seen in Moscow as blackmail.

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso met Mr. Putin last week to demand that Russia ratify the Energy Charter Treaty, which would give foreign coun-

tries access to Russian pipelines and restrict Moscow's ability to set energy transit fees. The EU is also reluctant to let Gazprom have a bigger presence on European gas distribution markets and to agree to the Russian demand for long-term contracts to guarantee a stable market and prices for Russian oil and gas in Europe. President Putin effectively told Europe from Beijing that Russia has other options, and if the EU, which gets half of its gas imports from Russia, does not accept Moscow's sales terms, Russia can just redirect gas flows to China.

Mr. Putin sent a similar message to Japan when he confirmed plans to build a branch of the east Siberia-Pacific oil pipeline to China. The Pacific pipeline is projected to carry 80 million tonnes of oil a year, out of which China will get 30 million. However, Russia's

proven oil reserves in the region cannot support such export volumes, and China may get all available oil for itself.

Tokyo has promised to invest billions of dollars in the Russian Far East if Russia pumps all oil to the Pacific port of Nakhodka — closer to Japan than to China. But it could not secure a firm commitment from Russia. Neither could Beijing, as Mr. Putin balked at setting a time frame for the side pipeline.

These tactics are part of Mr. Putin's strategy to win possibly bigger benefits from Russia's natural resources in terms of political clout, investment, and technologies. Ahead of the G8 summit in St. Petersburg later this year, Moscow is showing the world's rich energy-consuming nations that the global energy market is no longer a buyer's market but is a seller's paradise.

## From India now, 'out of the box' ideas on Kashmir

Manmohan Singh speaks of two internal and two bilateral tracks for peace.

Siddharth Varadarajan

IN A major departure from the studied official refusal to engage with any of Pakistan's "out of the box" proposals on Kashmir, India on Friday signalled a new readiness to embrace fresh ideas in the search for "pragmatic, practical solutions" to the problems of the disputed region.

The ideas were contained in a speech delivered by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Amritsar during the flagging-off ceremony of the new bus service to Nankana Sahib in Pakistan. Taken together with his call for the speedy resolution of the Siachen, Sir Creek, and Baglihar issues, the Prime Minister's suggestions on Kashmir and his formally stated desire for a Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Security with Pakistan have cleared the way for the peace process to be raised to a higher level.

On Kashmir, the Prime Minister outlined a road map for peace that would have four distinct components. Two of these would be internal to those areas of Jammu and Kashmir that are in the "control" of India and

Pakistan, and two would be bilateral. The latter would involve the India-Pakistan official dialogue as well as a process of encouraging the two parts of Jammu and Kashmir to work out "cooperative, consultative mechanisms" between themselves to solve problems of economic and social development in the region.

By stressing the necessity of internal dialogues in both India and Pakistan, Dr. Singh has achieved two objectives. The first is to emphasise that insofar as there is a problem to be resolved, this concerns the entire territory of the erstwhile princely State of Jammu and Kashmir and not just those areas in India's control or within the boundaries of "Azad Jammu and Kashmir." This means the so-called Northern Areas in Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir would also have to be a part of the peace process. The second objective is to find a way of squaring the circle defined by India's unwillingness to include "representatives" of the people of the State in the formal India-Pakistan dialogue on Kashmir. By linking internal dialogue to the eventual resolution

of the problem, however, the Prime Minister is acknowledging the centrality of popular grievances to the emerging equation.

Where the Prime Minister has broken exciting new ground is in his suggestion that the two parts of Jammu and Kashmir should be encouraged to develop cross-border institutional mechanisms.

These mechanisms provide the only practical way of making borders irrelevant while keeping intact the *de jure* sovereignty of both India and Pakistan over territories they control. Such an approach would appear to meet the 'Agra test' mentioned by President Pervez Musharraf during the ill-fated India-Pakistan summit in 1999. During his famous breakfast interaction with Indian editors, he had argued that the two Governments needed to "negate" solutions to the Kashmir issue that were unacceptable to the other and focus on what would remain on the table once maximalist positions were abandoned.

Soon after he became Prime Minister in 2004, Dr. Singh said that short of redrawing borders or partitioning territory on a religious basis he was willing to look at any

solution to the Kashmir issue. President Musharraf, while acknowledging that borders could not be redrawn, has also stressed that the Line of Control cannot be made into a juridical border either. During his visit to New Delhi in April 2005, he suggested that the only possible solution was to make the LoC irrelevant.

In the aftermath of the historic joint statement during that visit, where many of these ideas were hinted at or incorporated, India appeared reluctant to follow through with proposals that could give a precise shape to the notion of making borders irrelevant. The Indian bureaucracy was distrustful of the idea and was more interested in holding the question of Kashmir in abeyance until the two sides had built up a sufficient fund of trust between themselves. But with Prime Minister Singh now indicating a certain desire to break away from the conservatism of the Indian security establishment, a path has been opened for India and Pakistan to enter into a meaningful and practical dialogue on Kashmir rather than the reiteration of settled positions we have seen so far.

MIKHAIL FRADKOV VISIT ■ 'Move to supply uranium to TAPS does not violate NSG guidelines'

# India keen to expand N-coop with Russia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

**D**ESPERATELY short" of hydrocarbon resources, India today sought expansion of civil nuclear cooperation with Russia and talked about the possibility of involving Moscow in the Iran-India gas pipeline project.

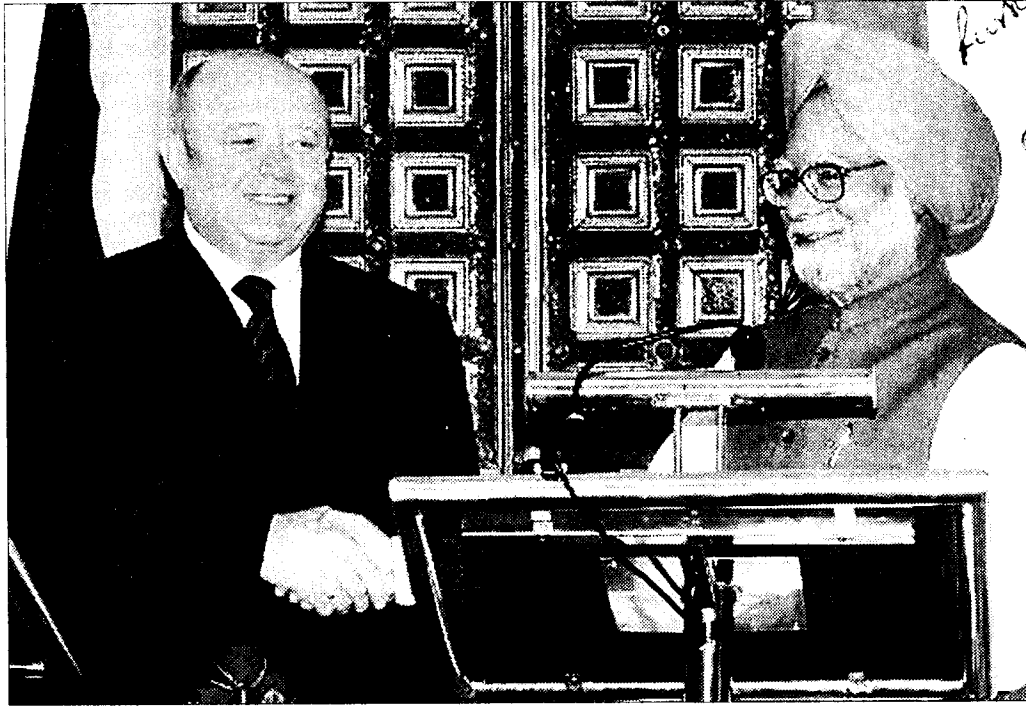
India also thanked Russia for its decision to supply urgently-needed 60 metric tonnes of uranium to Tarapur Atomic Plant Station (TAPS).

After about two-hour long talks with his Russian counterpart Mikhail Fradkov here, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said India envisioned a "substantial increase" in the share of nuclear energy in its overall energy mix as he appreciated Moscow's decision to supply uranium to Tarapur nuclear plant.

Addressing a joint press conference, Singh and Fradkov said the two countries had set up a joint study group to enhance cooperation in trade and investment with an aim of raising the bilateral trade volume to US\$10 billion by 2010 and agreed to soon conclude an agreement allowing investment of funds from the rupee-rouble debt account in India.

The two countries signed various agreements, including two related to implementation of cooperation in respect of the global satellite navigation system (Glonass).

"I am confident that both countries will utilise opportunities to



Russian PM Mikhail Fradkov with Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

expand our partnership in civil nuclear energy cooperation," Singh said.

"I would like to convey our warm appreciation to the Russian Government for responding positively to meet the requirements for nuclear fuel supplies to Tarapur I and II," Singh said.

The US has expressed reservations to the move to supply uranium, saying such a step should be taken only after India fulfilled its obligations under the Indo-US civil nuclear deal. However, both India and Russia have brushed aside the US reservations saying the move did not violate the NSG guidelines.

During the talks between Singh and Fradkov, India is understood to have sought expediting of supplies of material and equipment by Russia for under-construction Kudankulam nuclear project.

Under a deal of 2001, Russia had committed to supply 90 per cent of material and equipment to units I and II of the plant, which are scheduled to be operational by 2007 and 2008, respectively.

Singh said he had accepted President Vladimir Putin's invitation to attend the G-8 summit being hosted by Russia in St. Petersburg in July this year.

Asked about the prospects of Russia's involvement in the pro-

posed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project, Singh said "ways and means can be explored" in this regard considering that Moscow had the experience and expertise in building such pipelines.

Fradkov said if such a suggestion is put forward, Russia would consider it.

"India is desperately short of hydrocarbon resources and therefore we are interested in entering into bilateral and trilateral arrangements to meet the gaps, Singh said, noting that the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project was being pursued in this context.

## Kalam: Time ripe for marketing Brahmos

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

PRESIDENT A P J Abdul Kalam today said the time had come for marketing the Brahmos cruise missile, jointly produced by India and Russia.

Kalam conveyed this to Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov when the latter called on him at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. During the 40-minute meeting, the two sides discussed bilateral issues in various fields and the President observed that the time had come for making joint efforts to market Brahmos missile, Rashtrapati Bhavan spokesman S M Khan said after the meeting.

Kalam, during his visit to Russia, had visited the NPOM facility outside Moscow. NPOM is the Russian partner in a joint venture with DRDO which was set up in 1999. This was Kalam's fourth visit to NPOM which had designed the world's first nuclear cruise missile for the erstwhile Soviet Navy.

Brahmos missile's successful trials have been completed and its serial production has begun. Kalam also emphasised on laboratory-to-laboratory contact of scientists from the two countries and suggested that 20 laboratories in each country be selected for the purpose, the spokesman said.

Appreciating the idea, the Russian Prime Minister said this would further strengthen the hi-tech operation between the two countries. The two leaders also discussed the ongoing Sakhalin-1 oil project in Russia's East Coast. ONGC is also assisting in the project.

18 MAR 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS



## U-TURN: Move To Clear Three-Decade Fuel Supply Backlog For Units

# Russia to supply uranium for Tarapur...

Reuters  
NEW DELHI

INDIA will receive uranium from Russia to run two atomic power plants that have struggled to find fuel after the US stopped supplies more than three decades ago, the foreign ministry said on Tuesday.

Moscow's decision to supply fuel to India's Tarapur nuclear power plants came nearly two weeks after New Delhi and Washington sealed a landmark deal. The pact aims to give India access to atomic equipment and fuel from the US, and eventually from other nuclear nations. Russia, a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) — an informal club of nations that control global nuclear trade — cannot supply fuel to countries like India which have not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

But Moscow would send the shipment under an NSG 'safety exception clause' which allows fuel transfers if there is reason to believe that starving a reactor of fuel could result in a nuclear hazard. Indian foreign ministry spokesman Navtej Samra said: "At India's request, Russia has agreed to supply a limited amount of uranium

fuel for the safeguarded units I and II of the Tarapur atomic power station," he said. "The shortage of fuel for Tarapur would have affected its continued operations under reliable and safe conditions," he said, adding that Russia had informed the NSG about the move. The Tarapur plants were built by US firm General Electric in the 1960s but Washington stopped fuel supplies after New Delhi conducted its first nuclear tests in 1974.

The two plants received fuel intermittently from France and Russia and the last supplies were made by Moscow in 2001, provoking American protests. Russia's latest decision coincides with a trip to New Delhi by Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov, who is due to make a two-day

visit to India later this week. The two countries were likely to sign a deal during the visit under which Russia would supply India with 60 tonnes of uranium, PTI reported, quoting Indian sources.

The India-US civilian nuclear cooperation deal aims to reverse three decades of global curbs on supplying atomic equipment and fuel to India, a nuclear weapons state. But the deal needs to be approved by a sceptical US Congress and backed by the NSG before India can get access to foreign nuclear technology and fuel.

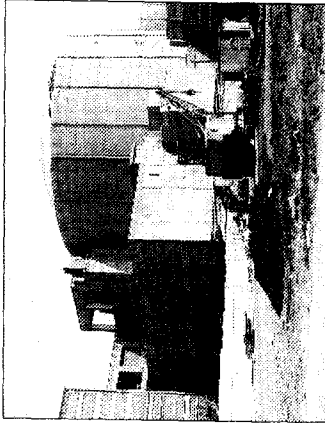
## ...deal doesn't flout norms, says India

PTI

NEW DELHI

INDIA on Wednesday said Russia's intention to supply uranium to Tarapur atomic plant violated no international law as it was being done under the safety exception clause of the nuclear suppliers group (NSG) guidelines. Reacting to US reservations on the Russian move, official sources said the urgently needed fuel was being supplied to Tarapur atomic power station's "safeguarded units".

The sources said the supply was being made under the safety exception clause of the NSG guidelines and there was no violation of any international law. Noting that Tarapur needed the fuel urgently to prevent it from shutting down, the sources said India had initially asked the US to provide fuel for the plant that was not possible under the current American laws. A similar request was made to Russia, to which it responded positively, the sources said. They said this issue was separate from the Indo-US civilian nuclear deal. US state department spokesperson Adam Ereli earlier said Russia should not supply uranium to Tarapur till India fulfils its obligations under the deal between New Delhi and Washington. "We recognise that...they (India) have need for fuel. And we think that deals to supply that fuel should move forward on the basis of a joint initiative, on the basis of steps that India will take that it has not yet taken," Mr Ereli said in Washington.



# Russia backs away from Iran proposal

Vienna, March 7 (Reuters): Russia today backed away from what EU diplomats said was a proposal to let Iran do some atomic research if it agreed to refrain from enriching uranium on an industrial scale for 7-9 years.

Russia abandoned the informal proposal, aimed at finding a compromise to the crisis over Iran's nuclear programme, after western rejection of the idea. The US and the EU want Iran to shelve all work to enrich uranium because of suspicions that Tehran is secretly trying to make nuclear weapons.

US vice-president Dick Cheney said today that Iran would be stopped from getting atomic bombs and faced "meaningful consequences" if it persists in defying calls to stop nuclear work which could lead to weapons.

In defying calls to halt all enrichment-related work, Iran seems to be counting on divisions in the UN Security Council over whether to resort to sanctions mooted by the US.

Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov denied after talks with US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice that he had made a new proposal to

defuse a crisis over Iran's nuclear aspirations that the Security Council may soon tackle. "There is no compromise new proposal," Lavrov said at a news conference with Rice, who added: "The Russians did not tell us of any new proposal."

EU diplomats said Russian officials informally raised the idea of a 7-9 year moratorium during consultations over the past week. US, British, French and German rejection came swiftly when word of the offer leaked today.

"The Russians explored this idea with us," said a diplo-

mat, who asked not to be identified, from one of the three EU states — Germany, France and Britain — working on the Iran issue, the so-called EU3.

The diplomat said when Lavrov "realised the EU3 and US would not accept its elements, he decided to deny it to save face".

In Moscow, a senior Kremlin aide said Russia shared the West's goal of keeping bomb-grade nuclear technology out of Iran but acknowledged it might be considering different approaches.

"There are divergences ...

but the goal is a single one — that Iran should be a predictable partner and there is no threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction," Sergei Prikhodko told RIA Novosti news agency.

Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, alluded to Moscow's reported formula when he held out hope yesterday for a deal to defuse the crisis without UN Security Council intervention against Iran.

Iran says its nuclear programme aims solely at generating electricity. But it con-

cealed atomic research from the IAEA for 18 years and its calls for Israel's destruction alarm the West.

US officials said any concession to let Iran feed uranium gas into a small cascade of centrifuges would inevitably give Tehran the knowhow to make nuclear warheads.

Iran reacted coolly to reports of the Russian offer as well, with one diplomat saying Tehran could accept a two-year moratorium on industrial atomic fuel production, but not longer, in exchange for assurances it could do cen-

trifuge research.



Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov in Washington. (AFP)



# Russia happy with talks

Vladimir Radyuhin

**MOSCOW:** Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said he was happy with his talks with Hamas leaders. A six-member delegation of Hamas led by Politburo chief Khaled Meshaal arrived in Moscow on Friday for a three-day visit at the invitation of President Vladimir Putin.

"We are satisfied with the negotiations," Mr. Lavrov said after holding more than two hours of talks with Hamas leaders. The Russian Minister stressed that Hamas is willing to honour all earlier peace

agreements if Israel shows goodwill.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Moscow conveyed to Hamas the four principles for West Asia settlement approved by the "quartet": renunciation of violence, adherence to earlier Israeli-Palestinian agreements, recognition of Israel's right to existence, and creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Mr. Meshaal described Israel's "aggressive policy" as the main obstacle to West Asia settlement and demanded that Israel leave the occupied territories.

THE HINDU

01-11-2006

washingtonpost.com

## Russia Ties Hamas's Prospects to Change

Radical Palestinian Group Must Become Peaceful Party, Foreign Minister Says

By Peter Finn  
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MOSCOW, March 3 -- Russia's foreign minister said Friday that the radical Islamic group Hamas has no "serious future" unless it transforms itself into a peaceful political party and integrates its military wing, which has claimed responsibility for dozens of suicide bombings in Israel, into the legitimate Palestinian security forces.

"This is the message we here in Moscow will be conveying to Hamas and hoping that Hamas will be listening," said the foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, before meeting with a delegation from the Palestinian group, which won parliamentary elections in January.

"We don't expect that Hamas will do all this and change itself overnight," said Lavrov, who will visit Washington on Monday. "It will be a process hopefully not as long as the process in Great Britain regarding Northern Ireland," where paramilitary groups have been encouraged to disarm and enter politics.

Russia, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations -- known in the Middle East peacemaking process as the quartet -- have called on Hamas, formally known as the Islamic Resistance Movement, to recognize Israel, renounce violence and accept international agreements previously signed by the Palestinian Authority.

After a two-hour meeting with the Hamas delegation, Lavrov said that "the Hamas leaders said they would honor earlier agreements," including the Arab Peace Initiative and the U.S.-backed peace plan known as the "road map."

Lavrov noted that these call for recognition of Israel in exchange for resolving issues connected with Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. He said that Hamas "insisted the moves must be reciprocal."

Khaled Meshal, head of the Hamas delegation, laid out what his organization defines as reciprocity. "If Israel officially announces readiness to return to the 1967 borders, to the return of Palestinian refugees, the destruction of the dividing wall, the release of all arrested Palestinians, our movement will take steps towards peace," Meshal said, citing steps sharply at odds with Israeli positions.

When he arrived in Moscow, Meshal said the issue of recognition of Israel was a "decided issue. We don't intend to recognize Israel."

The invitation to Hamas to visit Moscow, which President Vladimir Putin extended last month, took

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some governments by surprise. The United States and European Union have sought to isolate the group and refuse to talk to its leaders unless it renounces violence.

The Moscow visit also drew criticism in Israel, where commentators noted that Russia was willing to speak to Hamas but has refused negotiations with separatists in Chechnya. Russia has never labeled Hamas a terrorist organization.

Putin, however, will not meet with the delegation, apparently in an effort to avoid further damage to relations with Israel. The Palestinian group will get only a sightseeing tour of the Kremlin, Russian officials said.

Lavrov rejected suggestions that Russia was trying to wrest control of the diplomatic process in the Middle East from the United States. "If there is a deficit of leadership to promote the commonly agreed goals, then we believe we have a responsibility to fill this deficit and to try -- without taking over anybody's role," he said in the 30-minute interview at the Foreign Ministry.

Lavrov said Russia was motivated by the same spirit of international cooperation that it has shown in its negotiations with Iran over that country's nuclear program. Russia has offered to enrich uranium on its own soil for Iran's nuclear power plants, so as to guarantee that the country could not use the fuel to develop nuclear weapons.

Russia did not make this offer "for the sake of propaganda," Lavrov said, "because before this was announced we had very quiet, very professional consultations" with the European Union, United States and the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency. Russia acted "only after everyone said, 'This is a brilliant idea. Why don't you try it?'"

The energy agency board plans to meet at its Vienna headquarters Monday to discuss Iran. Iranian negotiators met again with officials from Britain, France and Germany in Vienna on Friday, but E.U. officials said there was no breakthrough on a deal to allay foreign concerns that Iran is trying to build nuclear weapons.

Lavrov said he had not given up on reaching a deal before the meeting. "I would not yet state that time is running out," said Lavrov, a former ambassador to the United Nations. "Let's give them a chance. The work continues."

If Iran fails to agree to a compromise by Monday, particularly a return to a moratorium on enriching uranium, the matter could switch to the U.N. Security Council, which has the power to impose sanctions. Lavrov, however, made it clear that he wants to keep the issue away from the Security Council and resolve it through the IAEA. He said the U.N. agency is the best mechanism to monitor Iran's activities and reach a compromise.

"If the issue is sent to the Security Council, we are concerned that this would lead to an escalation of the situation," the minister said. "If it is in the Security Council -- I know how the Security Council works -- you start with a soft reminder, then you call upon them, then you require, then you demand, then you threaten. It will become a self-propelling function while we haven't yet received answers from our partners on what would be the actual strategy in the Security Council."

He called military action unacceptable, "both for the Iranian situation but also in the context of what is going on the region. And I'm saying this not to send any messages to Iran so they should not be afraid of the use of force. . . . I want to emphasize the need for all those involved to develop a strategy to prevent

proliferation of nuclear weapons."

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