

Govt working to boost Indians' security

Paramilitary forces deployed

NILOVA Roy Chaudhury and RAJNISH Sharma
New Delhi, May 1

OFFICIALS WHO had gone to Kabul to try and negotiate the release of K. Suryanarayana returned with his body on Monday after reviewing the security for Indians working in Afghanistan. The government's priority has been to ensure foolproof security for the Indians working on government projects there, such as the railways, Border Roads Organisation, NTPC, Powergrid Corporation and hospitals, and, of course, the Embassy and four Consulates-General. But Suryanarayana's murder has focused attention on Indians working for foreign companies in Afghanistan.

No travel advisory has been issued for Indians choosing to work in that country, unlike Iraq, because, given the level of the government's involvement in Afghanistan's reconstruction, and the very high strategic stakes there, it cannot tell non-government Indians not to go there to work. According to

sources, that would mean a vote of no-confidence in President Hamid Karzai's government, even though its writ does not run in large parts of Afghanistan.

Paramilitary forces, such as the ITBP, have been deployed for security of government-run establishments, besides the local government security. The next tier would comprise the international security forces in the area, whether US or British or Italian or Poles, who "control" the province or region. In a basically tribal country with strong feudal loyalties, "arrangements" with local warlords and tribal chieftains who hold sway over regions not controlled by the Kabul government (most of Afghanistan) is essential. For incentives, they would provide some security. For a development project in Heart, for example, Ismail Khan would need to be approached.

But there is no guarantee of security

The internal security division of the Union ministry of home affairs (MHA) has advised Cabinet secretary B.K. Chaturvedi that a firmer security mechanism needs to be put in place for Indians working for private organisations in Afghanistan. Chaturvedi has discussed the outline of a blueprint on revamped security measures for them with MEA and MHA officials. "Although it's not possible to have a security personnel behind every Indian working with a private company, the government feels some kind of cover is required for them to avoid more casualties"

On death trail

Suryanarayana was the third Indian national to come under Taliban attack in the past four months. Despite high risks, Indians flock to the war-ravaged Afghanistan as they get three times the salary there.

STEPS TAKEN

- India raises the matter with president Hamid Karzai, who assures security for Indians
- Delhi sends 300 ITBP men for security of BRO men, working on a highway between Kandahar & Iran border
- An Indian team visits Kabul in March to review security. 200 BRO commandos are dispatched



THE MESSAGE

"Taliban wants to convey that India, a backer of the Karzai gov't, should get out. But New Delhi needs a stable Afghanistan. Without a secure Afghanistan, there can be no regional stability." —*Brahma Cheltaney, strategic-expert*



Afghanistan matters, & how

SURYANARAYANA'S MURDER has underlined India's high strategic and economic stakes in the reconstruction of war-torn Afghanistan. The murder has raised questions about the government's decision to expose around 2,000 Indians working in Afghanistan to potential terrorist attacks at the hands of the Taliban.

But New Delhi has not been unnerved by these attacks. The reasons for India's tenacious

with Afghanistan is vital for its ongoing battle against terrorism in the region that derives its moral and material support from the Taliban and powerful Afghan opium lords. During Afghan President Hamid Karzai's visit to India early this month, India and Afghanistan decided to deepen their co-operation in fighting terrorism and asked Pakistan to "join hands" against the common scourge. India has pledged \$650 million for Afghanistan's reconstruction in a slew of projects.

Cruel uncles killed my papa: Son

Hyderabad, May 1

FIVE YEARS of laughter and shade were all that little Satvateja had. Till his "Taliban uncles" crushed it with pathos.

Barely a few hours after he appealed to the militia to set his father free, telegram engineer Kastula Suryanarayana was found beheaded in the Zabul province of Afghanistan.

The boy just could not figure out what went wrong? "Why's everyone weeping over a picture of daddy?" The little boy was horrified to see his mother and sisters crying inconsolably and the streams of visitors trying unsuccessfully to console them.

Satvateja is still some where in the twilight zone between reality and preoccupation. On Saturday night, he realised that something was amiss. And he joined the chorus of appeals. While his sisters knew that their father would never return, the five-year-old tracked his tender head. His wide eyes were full of queries.

But didn't daddy speak over the phone just three days ago. Memories haunt. His eyes say so. Pate played dirty. "He had no inkling of what destiny had in store for him."

Agencies

Keralite killed in Iraq blast

HT Correspondent
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, May 1

EVEN BEFORE the country recovered from the shock of the gruesome murder of Suryanarayana, another Indian was killed in a landmine blast in the war-ravaged Iraq.

Sibi Kora, 34, a truck driver hailing from Kochi, met with the tragedy on Sunday evening. His employers in Kuwait, IAP Mutharath, called up his family members to inform he was no more. "We have no idea what really happened. We were told he was killed in the blast. Body will be brought to the country in a couple of days," Shobby, his cousin, told *Hindustan Times*.

Sibi survived by his wife and two children — eight and four — was working in Kuwait for the past eight months. "He had called up his wife the other day to inform about his Iraq trip. We never knew he would have met with such a sad end", inconsolable Shobby said.

"The company officials informed us that by tomorrow morning the body will be in Kuwait. It will be brought home either on Wednesday or on Thursday," he added.

However, his wife and children are yet to come to know about the tragedy. Even the telephone and television connections were snapped to save the family from the shock, at least for now.

Industries minister V.K. Ibrahim Kunhu called on the relatives and offered all help to bring back the body at the earliest.

Though the MEA order strictly prohibits all kinds of recruitment to Iraq, many agencies are discreetly sending jobseekers there through the Kuwait route.

India, a serious N-material market for Russia: Kiriyenko

DADAN UPADHYAY
MOSCOW, APRIL 5

THE head of Russia's Federal Nuclear Power Agency (Rosatom), Sergei Kiriyenko has said Russia considered India a serious nuclear energy market and it was conducting negotiations with several nuclear exporting countries to supply nuclear materials to New Delhi.

"For us, India is a serious nuclear energy market. In particular, we are discussing possible nuclear materials supplies to India with a number of nuclear exporting countries," said Kiriyenko ahead of his two-day visit to India on April 6 to discuss nu-

clear cooperation between the two countries.

Kiriyenko's visit comes after the recent Russian decision to deliver 60 tonnes of nuclear fuel for the two nuclear reactors of the Tarapur Atomic Power Station (TAPS). Russian PM Mikhail Fradkov during his visit to India last month described the supplies in the interest of the two countries, not against international commitments.

During his visit, Kiriyenko is expected to hold talks with the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, Dr Anil Kakodkar and National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan.

The spokesman for the

Agency, Sergei Novikov said that "prospects for the development of cooperation between the two countries in the field of high nuclear technologies and nuclear power engineering" will be high on the agenda of his talks with his counterparts in India.

Kiriyenko is also scheduled to inspect with Dr Kakodkar the construction of two 1,000 MW reactors at Kudankulam nuclear power station in Tamil Nadu. Earlier, Russia had offered to construct four additional reactors at the Kudankulam and the two sides may discuss the prospects of construction of more reactors.

06 APR 2006

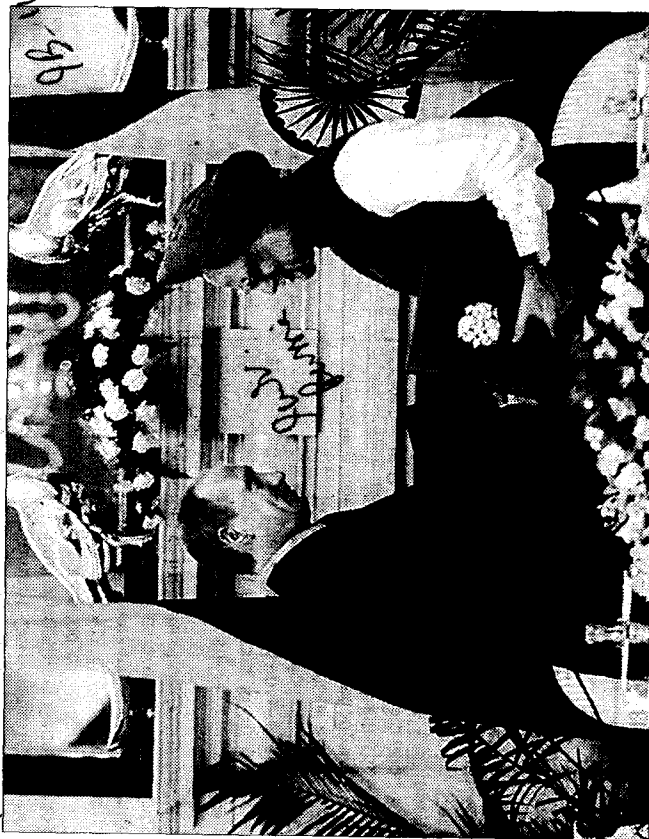
INDIAN EXPRESS

NUKE TECH | Says India is rapidly developing, has good track record

Ignore NPT for India: Russia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MOSCOW, APRIL 2

RECOGNISING India's energy needs, a senior Russian official has called for making an exception for the country in the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty to give it access to civilian nuclear technology. "We cannot ignore India's energy requirements. It is a rapidly developing country with a good non-proliferation record. We should probably make an exception in this case without adopting new norms that may erode the non-proliferation regime," director of the Foreign Ministry's Security and Disarmament Department, Anatoly Antonov told *Pro-Kremlin Vremya Novostei* daily.



A file photo of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Russian President Vladimir Putin in New Delhi during the latter's 2004 visit to India

cal recommendations for strengthening the NPT.

"However, it has reaffirmed the main point, that the NPT can and must be used to deal with new challenges and threats to the non-proliferation regime," Antonov observed. He said that Iranian and North Korean nuclear programmes remain on the G-8 agenda. "We will continue the search for new political and diplomatic approaches to settling this problem. We will use the services of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to find a mutually acceptable solution on Iran, which would allow Tehran to develop nuclear power engineering and at the same time ensure a purely peaceful dimension of its nuclear programme," he said.

On the non-proliferation aspects of the G-8 policy, Antonov said the NPT is an invaluable element of international security and stability, which the follow-up conference has proved, even though it failed to formulate practi-

“Russia will welcome Indian labour migration”

Foreign employees to be granted three-year work permits

Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW: Russia would welcome Indian labour migration to Siberia and other regions suffering from growing depopulation, a senior Russian migration official said here.

“We have no objection to labour migration from India to Siberia and the Far East,” Deputy Director of the Federal Migration Service Vyacheslav Postavnin said at a meeting with Indian businessmen working in Russia.

The official was responding to a suggestion that Russia could encourage labour migration from India as an alternative to the much-feared onslaught of Chinese migrants across the border to Siberia and the Far East. There are currently a few thousand Indians living in Russia, compared with hundreds of thousands of Chinese immigrants.

Earlier this month the Russian Parliament approved in first reading two bills aimed at liberalising Russia's migration policy in an effort to combat

• **New legislation will ease registration process for foreigners**

• **Under new rules foreigners will be allowed to stay for six months**

the rapid population decline in Russia, which totalled nine million in the past decade.

“The purpose of these bills is to remove bureaucratic hurdles to the immigration process,” Mr. Postavnin said.

The new legislation will significantly ease the registration process for foreigners arriving in Russia by allowing them to register their residency by mail instead of going through the hassle of applying for and obtaining registration documents.

Under the new rules foreigners will be allowed to stay in Russia for six months instead of three months today, and can extend their stay without having to leave the country.

Foreign businessmen and em-

year work permits that will be subject to renewal on an annual basis.

Replying to numerous complaints from Indian businessmen regarding problems in getting Russian visas, Mr. Postavnin cited a high rate of illegal migration from India to Russia as an obstacle to simplifying visa procedures.

“Every year about 50,000 Indians enter Russia, but just over 2,000 obtain work permits,” he said.

According to the Federal Migration Service, about 10 million migrant workers, mostly from former Soviet Republics, stay in Russia illegally, resulting in economic losses totalling \$7 billion.

Russia has said it will sign a new visa accord with India on condition the latter agrees to conclude a bilateral readmission pact.

The deputy head of the Federal Migration Service offered to work closely with the Indian Business Association in Russia to resolve problems faced by Indian businessmen and employees in this country.

MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2006

Time-tested friendship

The long-standing strategic partnership between India and Russia was reaffirmed once again during the visit of Premier Mikhail Fradkov. While seven agreements were signed on the occasion, the primary focus was on Moscow's promise to supply uranium fuel for the safeguarded reactors of the Tarapur power station. A pact to seal this particular deal was not necessary since the guidelines of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG) allow for the transfer of uranium fuel for safety reasons. Russia had relied on this provision when it made supplies for the first time in 2001. This does not, however, mean that the other members of the NSG will not complain, as they did on the last occasion, about the guidelines being violated. New Delhi and Moscow should be well aware that they cannot get on the wrong side of the major nuclear powers in the present circumstances. The United States administration had just initiated efforts to convince Congress to make India-specific exceptions in the anti-proliferation statutes. Washington also has its work cut out as it tries to sell the June 18 deal to the rest of the NSG. New Delhi's stakes in the deal to ease the supply of nuclear-related equipment and material are obvious enough. Moscow too would stand to gain if the NSG guidelines are redrawn since it could become a major player in India's nuclear power programme, the Koodankulam plant standing as a model of cooperation in this field.

The agreement between the Indian Space Research Organisation and the Russian Federal Space Agency on the joint development of the Glonass-K navigation satellites adds to the record of significant cooperation in this technologically challenging sphere. So does the agreement between the two organisations to launch Glonass-M satellites by a variant of the Geo-synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle. The efforts by the two countries to develop synergies in the field of conventional energy should get a boost from the memorandum of understanding between the Indian Oil Corporation and Stroytransgaz for pursuing petro-infrastructure projects worldwide through a consortium. India should seriously explore ways of involving Russia in the construction of the proposed gas pipeline that will run from Iran through Pakistan. Moscow has good relations with all the countries that will benefit from this project and is unlikely to place political obstacles. Russian companies might also offer better terms than some of the competitors. The one sphere in which the Indo-Russian interaction is way below the optimum is economy, especially bilateral trade. The joint study group set up to draft a comprehensive agreement will, hopefully, make recommendations for achieving the trade target of \$10 billion over the next five years. Meanwhile, the Governments should work at removing the hurdles in the way of closer interaction between the businessmen of the two countries.

THE HINDU

Gas pipeline: "Russia can be roped in"

We'll consider suggestions: Fradkov

Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI: New Delhi is hopeful that "ways and means" can be found to involve Moscow in the construction of the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said after talks with Russian Premier Mikhail Fradkov here on Friday.

Mr. Fradkov pointed to Russia's "ample experience" in building pipelines. "If there are suggestions, we will certainly consider them," he said about its involvement in the project.

Taking questions, Dr. Singh thanked Moscow for agreeing to supply uranium fuel for the safeguarded reactors of the Tarapur atomic power station, stressing that India looked forward to working with Russia bilaterally and multilaterally.

Senior officials said enhanced civilian nuclear cooperation figured in the talks between Dr. Singh and Mr. Fradkov even as Russia was awaiting the U.S. Congress approval of the New Delhi-Washington nuclear deal and the lifting of curbs by the Nuclear Suppliers' Group.

According to the officials, no separate agreement was necessary for Moscow to supply fuel to Tarapur, which comes under a safety clause Russia invoked. It has already informed the NSG of its decision to supply the fuel.

Pointing out that energy security would be the theme of the G-8 summit being hosted by Russia in St. Petersburg in July, Dr. Singh said there was a substantial increase in nuclear cooperation between the two countries and described the Koodankulam plant in Tamil Nadu as a "flagship project."

On the gas pipeline from Iran, he said India was desperately short of hydrocarbons and was interested in entering into both bilateral and multilateral arrangements to address the issue. Both Dr. Singh and Mr. Fradkov

• **Enhanced civilian nuclear cooperation figures in talks**

• **No separate accord for Tarapur supply: officials**

• **Study group set up for economic cooperation**

• **\$10 billion trade target for next five years**

stressed the importance of building business-to-business links for India and Russia to enjoy a healthy trade relationship. Dr. Singh said they had set a trade target of \$10 billion for the next five years.

A joint study group was set up to chart a future comprehensive economic cooperation agreement, he said. Private sector partnership was the way forward in trade and investment matters.

Visa will be made easy

After Dr. Singh expressed a hope that Indian businesspersons would find it easier to travel to Russia, Mr. Fradkov gave an assurance that he would issue appropriate instructions for this to materialise.

At the same time, he wanted the visa issue dealt with as a comprehensive package so that Russian concerns over illegal immigration were also addressed.

Describing his two-day visit as a "success," Mr. Fradkov said he was hopeful of India and Russia being able to carry forward their strategic partnership.

"We are trying to overcome the inertia in our trade and economic relations," he told presspersons.

Calling for joint ventures, he said aircraft servicing, construction of airports and roads, space, nuclear energy and information technology would be the areas to focus on.

18 MAR 2006

The Hindu

India thanks with oil pledge for uranium

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 17.

— Describing India to be “desperately short of hydrocarbons”, the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, today said nuclear energy cooperation will be an important area for Indo-Russian ties demonstrated by the agreement to supply fuel for the Tarapur plant, even as he announced that India would aim to buy one billion barrels per day of oil from Russia.

The PM and the visiting Russian premier, Mr Mikhail Fradkov, today signed seven agreements which

include two each for cooperation in the Russian GPS system, Glonass and banking. The two leaders had over one-and-a-half hours of discussions.

Speaking to the Press after the meeting, the PM 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”.

Russia has agreed to supply 60 metric tons of low enriched uranium under the “safety exception” clause of the Nuclear Suppliers’ group guidelines. Both India and Russia had



Dr Singh with Russian Prime Minister Mr Mikhail Fradkov. — AFP asserted that they were not violating NSG guidelines, while the USA had expressed reservation over the deal.

“I am confident that both

kulam project “as a flagship of our cooperation”. During the talks, India is understood to have sought faster supply of materials and equipment by Russia for the Kudankulam nuclear project. Dr Singh said Russia, with its experience in pipeline construction, could be involved in the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline. “India is desperately short of hydrocarbon resources and therefore we are interested in entering into bilateral and trilateral arrangements,” he said.

Though he said nuclear energy will have more priority in India’s energy mix, they discussed fossil fuels.

Dr Singh said India was keen to buy liquefied natural gas from Russia.

US reservations

The USA has expressed reservations about the Russian supply of fuel for Tarapur, indicating that the timing might be wrong. “The proper way to do this would be to have the US Congress act and hopefully change our laws, have the NSG... act and change NSG practices, and then countries — the USA, France, Russia — would be free to engage... in civil nuclear trade with India.”

said US under secretary of political affairs Mr Nicholas Burns.

Fuel supply: Russia echoes India

SNS and Agencies

NEW DELHI, March 16. — A day after India said that its fuel deal with Russia did not violate international guidelines, the Russian premier, Mr Mikhail Fradkov, aired similar views here.

Answering a query at a business conference this evening, Mr Fradkov said that Russian supply of nuclear fuel to India "does not contradict international commitments". "We informed the Nuclear Suppliers Group of us supplying fuel to the Tarapur power plant," said Mr Fradkov, who arrived this evening on

a two-day visit to India.

Civilian nuclear energy tops the agenda of the Russian Prime Minister, who is accompanied by wife Elina. The couple was warmly received at Palam Technical Airport by the minister of state for external affairs, Mr Anand Sharma.

The visit, which takes place in the wake of Russia's decision to supply uranium to the Tarapur plant, is likely to culminate in the two countries signing a fuel supply deal.

The Kudankulam Atomic Power plant is being built in Tamil Nadu with Russian help. According to a 2001

agreement, Russia, besides designing the plant, is committed to supplying 90 per cent of the equipment and material. The units I and II of the plant are scheduled to be operational by 2007 and 2008, respectively.

India feels that the construction may not be completed on schedule and wants Russia to expedite supply of material, an official source said here, adding, the request could be made during Mr Fradkov's meeting with Dr Manmohan Singh. Once commissioned, the two reactors are expected to generate 2,000 MW of power.

Bush pat comes with N-Bill push

WASHINGTON, March 16. — The US believes India is "poised to shoulder global obligations" in a manner "befitting a major power". In a National Security Strategy report released today, US President Mr George W Bush said: "We have made great strides in transforming America's relationship with India, a major power that shares our commitment to freedom, democracy, and rule of law." The Bush government introduced a Bill in the US Congress today, seeking amendment to the Atomic Energy Act to help implement the nuclear pact with India, saying, it would bring New Delhi into Non-Proliferation Regime. — IANS

'NO VIOLATION OF NSG GUIDELINES'

Govt defends

Russian fuel

Statesman News Service

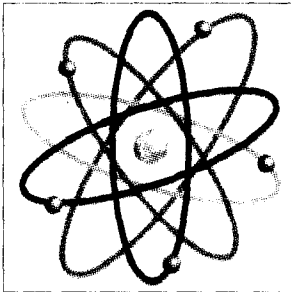
NEW DELHI, March 15. — India has said that there is no violation of NSG guidelines in the proposed Russian supply of fuel for Tarapur.

This clarification came after the US yesterday noted that any deal to supply fuel to India should be a "joint initiative" on the basis of "steps that India will take that it has not yet taken". It effectively censured India and Russia for jumping the gun before the NSG guidelines had been modified to make an exception in transfer of technology under the civilian nuclear energy agreement.

The news of the supply deal broke just a few days before the Russian premier, Mr Mikhail Fradkov, arrives in India on a three-day visit tomorrow.

The external affairs ministry spokesperson, Mr Navtej Sarna, said, "There is no violation of NSG guidelines and Russia has approached NSG under the safety exception clause. US is aware of the urgent need for fuel for Tarapur."

The safety exception clause allows fuel transfers if it is feared that a nuclear hazard could result from a reactor being kept non-



functioning due to lack of fuel.

He said the US could not accede to the Indian request for fuel supply to Tarapur under current domestic laws. As per the 18 July joint statement, while the US works to change its laws and lobbies to modify NSG guidelines, it also commits US, "in the meantime, to encourage its partners to consider India's request for such fuel supplies expeditiously."

"India has had to seek urgent and limited supplies of uranium fuel to enable Tarapur to continue its operations in safety," said Mr Sarna.

He added that "once US laws have been amended, India looks forward to the US emerging as a major and reliable partner to India, not only in respect of assured fuel supplies, but for other aspects of civilian nuclear energy cooperation".

Russia had used the same "safety exception

clause" to explain its proposal to supply 58 tons of low-enriched uranium to Tarapur in 2001. But the Nuclear Suppliers' Group had convened a special session and censured Russia, noting that the use of the clause in this particular case was not "in its spirit". Russia had thereafter given an undertaking not to do such a thing, again.

That Russia and India have again resurrected that deal, seems to indicate that they assume that there has been a basic change in the world's mind-set towards Indian nuclear programme. Observers are also interested in how the US congress will react to such news, especially as already some Congressmen and senators have expressed certain reservations on the deal as it does not meet non-proliferation goals.

Interestingly, in his 27 February statement in Parliament, the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, had said certain assurances in the 18 July statement had still to be implemented. "It is true that certain assurances in the 18 July statement remain to be fulfilled — the supply of imported fuel for Tarapur I and II, for one," he told both Houses in a suo motu statement.

16 MAR 2006

THE STATESMAN

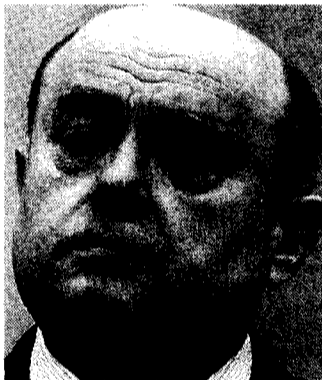
Nuclear energy, space top on agenda of Fradkov visit

Two-day trip will put greater focus on bilateral economic agenda

Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW: Nuclear energy and space will dominate the agenda of Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov's visit to India on March 16 and 17.

Russia's nuclear energy chief Sergei Kiriyyenko is accompanying him. Russia is keen on cashing in on its advantage of being the only foreign country today involved in the construction of nuclear reactors in India. "The visit will put greater focus on the bilateral economic agenda and enable the two sides to look for practical ways of expanding trade and economic cooperation," India's Ambassador Kan-



Mikhail Fradkov

wal Sibal said here.

India hopes to take advantage of Mr. Fradkov's visit to secure further guarantees of wider access for its oil companies to the Russian hydrocarbon market. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation is trying to acquire Russia's Udmurtneft oil company, while Indian Oil is negotiating to buy a stake in Yuganskneftegas, a major Russian oil and gas firm.

The two sides are expected to sign two agreements on India's participation in the Russian Glonass global space communication system. One accord will define modalities of joint development of a new-generation communication satellite, Glo-

nass-K, and the other will provide for Indian rockets launching the Glonass satellites.

Billionaires in delegation

A large delegation accompanying Mr. Fradkov includes Russian billionaires such as aluminium magnate Oleg Deripaska and head of AFK Sistema telecoms giant Vladimir Yevtushenkov, who are keen on investing in India's booming economy.

Russian Ambassador to India Vyacheslav Trubnikov said New Delhi-Moscow trade could increase from \$2 billion to \$8-10 billion in the next five years.

15 MAR 2006

THE HINDU

Russia to supply fuel for Tarapur reactor

Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW: Russia will supply uranium fuel for the Tarapur reactor.

"We have informed the Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG) that we are delivering fuel to the Tarapur reactor," Sergei Novikov, spokesman for the Russian atomic energy agency, Rosatom, told *The Hindu* here. He stressed that the deal, technical-

ly in violation of NSG restrictions, was motivated by safety considerations.

"It is necessary to replace the fuel at Tarapur to avoid serious safety risks resulting from overburning of old fuel."

Rosatom head Sergei Kiriyenko will visit India during April 2-6 to review the progress of construction of two Russian reactors at the Koodankulam nuclear power project in Tamil

Nadu and discuss further nuclear energy cooperation.

Russia, only foreign country present in the Indian nuclear energy market, is keen on carving out a bigger role for itself in India's ambitious civilian nuclear programme ahead of the imminent lifting of international nuclear restrictions on New Delhi. Russian Ambassador Vyacheslav Trubnikov said the recent India-U.S. nuclear deal

could facilitate further supplies of Russian nuclear reactors and other high-tech equipment.

"We have always favoured Delhi's greater involvement in international nuclear cooperation and the lifting of restrictions on the supply of nuclear technology and equipment for India's civilian nuclear power industry," the envoy said in an interview to the *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* daily.

15 MAR 2006

THE HINDU

Change in stand on Iran unlikely

Manmohan calls up Putin; both exchange views

Amit Baruah

Ind. Summ.
NEW DELHI: A change in the Government stand on the Iran nuclear issue at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board meeting on Monday is unlikely, Government sources told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

India voted against Iran in September 2005 and last month. "There's little chance of a change in the position," the sources said.

An indication that India is no longer insisting that the matter be resolved within the confines of the IAEA Board was available from an official statement on Sunday on the phone conversation between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Russian President Vladimir Putin late on Saturday.

"The leaders exchanged views in the context of the forthcoming meeting of the Board of Governors of the IAEA on March 6. [The] Prime Minister welcomed Russia's efforts to address the issues related to Iran's nuclear programme through dialogue and consultations," the statement said.

Interestingly, the 20-minute conversation came barely 24 hours after U.S. President George W. Bush flew out of New

- Manmohan welcomes Russia's efforts to address issue through dialogue
- Ongoing cooperation in the field of civilian nuclear energy discussed
- Putin briefs Manmohan about G-8 Summit to be held in St. Petersburg in July

Delhi after clinching a nuclear deal with India.

"The two leaders also discussed the cooperation in civilian nuclear energy," the statement said, but gave no details.

"President Putin also briefed Prime Minister Singh about the G-8 Summit being hosted by Russia in St. Petersburg in July 2006. The Prime Minister conveyed his acceptance of Mr. Putin's invitation to participate in a broader dialogue with the G-8 at St. Petersburg," it said.

The sources said the IAEA Director-General had sent to the United Nations Security Council his latest report on the agency's verification.

On February 4, the Board, in a resolution, requested him to report to the Security Council all IAEA reports and resolutions, as adopted, relating to implementation of safeguards in Iran.

Giving reasons for the pro-American, anti-Iran vote, the External Affairs Ministry said on September 24, 2005 that New Delhi did not want the Iran issue referred to the Council and preferred to keep the issue within the confines of the IAEA Board.

As per the February 4 resolution, the IAEA is bound to convey to the Council any new resolution the Board's March meeting may pass.

The U.S. and its allies had the numbers for another resolution the sources said, adding that the position that would be taken by Russia and China, both within the IAEA Board and the Security Council, would be critical.

In a related development, senior Iranian official Ali Larijani when asked about the India-U.S nuclear understanding, was quoted as saying in an interview "We are a friend of India and will not oppose it [the deal]."

06 MAR 2006

THE HINDU