

India as a rising global player

Interest in India was evident at the recent Asia Security Conference in Singapore.

P.S. Suryanarayana

POLITICALLY RESONANT across East Asia is the idea that India, not just China, is a potential global player in almost all spheres.

China is widely reckoned to be way ahead of India in the economic domain and in some aspects of space exploration. However, the perceived strengths of India, including its democracy that the West calls a non-threatening attribute, are often assessed, without any itemised comparison with those of China. Unsurprisingly, therefore, a major theme during the Asia Security Summit, organised in Singapore by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in early June, was "India: A rising global player."

Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee projected India as "a core state" whose role would be "crucial for ... long-term peace, stable balance of power, economic growth, and security in Asia." Indicating India's readiness to meet the "security deficit" which marked today's international scene, he argued that New Delhi's emphasis on its "defence preparedness" was not detrimental to its pressing development agenda.

He also outlined the basic principles of India's foreign policy and defence diplomacy: no territorial ambitions and no export of ideologies including democracy. India's current movement towards "a strategic part-

nership" with the United States, as exemplified by last year's framework agreement on defence cooperation, was traced as a new dynamic within this political framework.

Significant, in this context, is the response by U.S. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to a question from this correspondent on the sidelines of the summit. Asked whether the U.S. was now seeing India as just a dialogue partner, a potential ally or simply a friend in the military domain, Mr. Rumsfeld, who had just completed a round of talks with Mr. Mukherjee, would have none of these diplomatic "code words."

He said: "We certainly expect to see that our areas of common interest will continue to bring us together, from a military-to-military standpoint, in the months and years to come."

As political spin, this formulation reflected the unresolved nature of the future course of U.S.-India defence cooperation. However, Mr. Mukherjee amplified, outside the summit, that neither the Chinese leaders, who he met in Beijing before the Singapore conference, nor the Pentagon chief raised the possibility of India emerging as a factor in the U.S.-China equations now or in the future.

Moreover, Mr. Mukherjee told the summit that India and China were now engaged in a constructive dialogue and they recognised that "there is enough space for devel-

oping together, growing together, not at the expense of the other but independent of each other."

In all, reassuring to East Asian leaders was Mr. Mukherjee's presentation of India's world-view on international security issues, which covered aspects of New Delhi's varied cooperation and even differences with Washington on a controversial scheme such as the Proliferation Security Initiative. Significantly, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, spoke for the region when he told the summit that "a complex web of economic linkages is stitching East Asia together."

Australia's perspective

Unsurprisingly, in such a situation, Australian Defence Minister Brendan Nelson said, after the conference, that "China and India are going to be significant determinants of our [Australia's] place in the region for the foreseeable future."

Such a perspective, which may impinge on the evolving equations among China as also India and the U.S. as Australia's ally, does not contradict the emerging perceptions about a growing bonhomie between Beijing and New Delhi.

What, then, are the ground realities as seen from the West, particularly the U.S. which still is the dominant player? John Chipman, IISS director-general and chief executive, believes that "the dangerous trip-

tych of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iran continues to dominate the defence and security agenda, as do the wider, now iconic, problems of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."

As for solutions to these or other security issues, Western experts see the relevance of India and China, as also Pakistan as regards terrorism and proliferation. Overall, though, the Western focus looms over the U.S.-China-India interactions.

Tim Huxley, a ranking IISS specialist, rules out, for now, any possibility of a formal security alliance involving the U.S. and India besides Australia as also Japan. However, according to him, Washington might still wish to look at these other countries for "a long-term insurance policy [of] ... hedging against ... a more powerful and assertive China."

Adam Ward, another IISS expert, also tends to discount the possibility of a formal cabal involving Washington, Canberra, New Delhi, and Tokyo.

A dynamic factor in this situation is that China has "not blocked," in the words of American specialist Robert Sutter, the ongoing "fundamental" build-up of military ties between Washington, on one side, and Tokyo and New Delhi, on different tracks on the other. Mr. Sutter traces this reality to China's current policy of seeking ascendancy on the global stage through a "peace and development" strategy.

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THE HINDU

MEA discovers public diplomacy

Indo-Asian News Service

NEW DELHI, May 5: India's external affairs ministry has created a new public diplomacy division to educate and influence global and domestic opinion on key policy issues and project a better image of the country commensurate with its rising international standing.

Mr Arif Khan, additional secretary in the external affairs ministry, has been put in charge of the publicity division, which will try to sensitise and influence think tanks, universities, media and experts to create a more nuanced understanding of the government's stance on tricky

issues such as the Iranian nuclear imbroglio, the India-US nuclear deal or relations with neighbours.

"The public diplomacy section will try to create a more coherent perception of such complex issues," official sources said.

The new division has been carved out of the external publicity division and will be in charge of organising audio-visual publicity and publications.

"India is a prime contender for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. The idea is to project a new image of a rising India that is set to play a bigger role in world affairs," the sources said.

The idea of setting up a separate public diplomacy division has been inspired by the American system, which has a department of public diplomacy to project the country's foreign policy interests abroad. Post 9/11, the department launched a major initiative to improve the image of the US in the West Asia.

The external publicity division, headed by Mr Navtej Sarna, joint secretary and official spokesperson of the external affairs ministry, will now mainly interact with Indian and foreign media on foreign policy issues and be involved in the planning of VVIP visits to foreign countries.

06 MAY 2006

THE STATESMAN

ADB MEET ■ FTAs with China, Japan on track; Sees new growth avenues for India in eventual Asian free trade area

PM reinforces India's Look East policy

ENSECON/OMIC BUREAU
HYDERABAD, MAY 5

MAKING the importance of India's 'Look East' policy apparent, India today said it was working on free trade agreements with China, Japan and South Korea and eventually envisioned the creation of a larger Pan-Asian free trade area that included Australia and New Zealand as well.

Speaking at the Asian Development Bank's annual general meeting today, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said that after having concluded FTAs

with SAARC, Singapore and Thailand, India was "working on similar arrangements with ASEAN, Japan, China and South Korea" as well. He also reiterated that India needed \$150 billion for infrastructure development.

Describing this move as an important part of India's Look East Policy, the PM said that such "web of engagements may herald an eventual free trade area in Asia covering all major Asian economies and possibly extending to Australia and New Zealand".

According to him, the Asian region was already "an engine of global growth" and that

such "Pan-Asian FTAs" could be the future of Asia opening "new growth avenues" for our India as well.

The Prime Minister sent out a clear signal that India was determined to enlarge the Indo-ASEAN partnership domain to make the 21st Century "a truly Asian century" for which India had "actively pursued external liberalisation by cutting down customs duty rates".

Here he said that the current peak rate, at around 12.5 per cent, was close to ASEAN levels and that India had already announced a policy objective of aligning duty rates

and also devise strategies to cope with the trend of rising crude oil prices.

He said that "the current global imbalance is reflected in the huge disparities in the current account positions of different countries". He pointed to US's current account deficit which stood at \$805 billion; Japan's current account surplus at \$163.9 billion; China's and West Asian surpluses at \$158.6 billion \$196 billion respectively.

While some mismatches were to be expected and even desirable but "large disparities raise concerns" about their "unsustainability

and provoke the fear of hard landings".

It's here that he said that there was a need for a coordinated effort to correct the imbalances to prevent a sudden downturn and international financial institutions especially needed "to play a proactive role in this regard".

On crude oil prices that have touched \$75/barrel and have all oil importing countries worried, he said that it was incumbent on all international financial institutions to "pool their collective wisdom, expertise and experience to devise credible strategies to enable the world economy to

cope with the increased unpredictability and volatility of energy prices and their impact on processes of world economic growth".

Pointing out that it was impossible to have growth and progress in isolation in a globalised world, the PM said countries and international agencies had to collaborate to produce welfare-enhancing synergies. In that regard, he said that the challenge before Asia was to create and maintain a regional and international environment that was conducive to maintenance of high economic growth on a sustainable basis.



Finance Minister P. Chidambaram (left) with PM Manmohan Singh at the ADB meet in Hyderabad on Friday. Reuters

be sustained and therefore urged global financial institutions to first play an active role to prevent a sudden global economic downturn

06 MAY 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

Wooing Beijing

11-19
MS *New foreign policy reinvents non-alignment* *9/10/06*

Indian foreign policy has recently turned assertive and confident, and defence minister Pranab Mukherjee's declaration of a strategic partnership between New Delhi and Beijing is a sign of this. Non-alignment, in the old sense, was understood as the refusal to get into "entangling" military alliances (apart from the question of sourcing arms from Russia). New Delhi's entering into a strategic understanding with Washington, followed by Mukherjee's sojourn in Beijing where, for the first time, joint exercises by army and air force units are being contemplated, gives non-alignment a new, positive content — what we could call neo-non-alignment. It means that New Delhi attempts to arrive at a defence understanding with all important players in Asia — and Beijing, of course, is a very important player. The old sense of non-alignment meant that India ploughed a lonely furrow, as it found itself factored out of everybody's security equation. Neo-non-alignment, however, would mean New Delhi enters into security dialogue with everyone who has interests in South Asia. Strategic alignments don't have to be of the "either/or" variety envisioned by containment doctrines, or the "neither/nor" of old-style non-alignment; "both/and" delivers much more by way of collective security arrangements.

New Delhi could tell Washington that their strategic ties are independent of New Delhi's defence dealings with Beijing, and vice versa. It's in keeping with this newer, more sophisticated understanding of Indian engagement that Mukherjee is taking a sweep through Asia, meeting defence chiefs from Tokyo to Beijing to Singapore. This year is billed as the year of friendship between India and China. Apart from military ties trade between the two countries is growing exponentially, and is billed to touch \$20 billion this year. A security dialogue and holding of joint military exercises will be an important ice-breaker between the two nations. New Delhi should build on the momentum created by this, as well as a possible visit this year by president Hu Jintao, to finally resolve the border dispute. If the border dispute with Beijing could be resolved, armed forces disengaged and direct trade routes opened across the border, that would make "Chindia", or China and India acting in concert on the world stage, more of a real possibility.

31 MAY 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA



AFP

Manmohan Singh with ADB president Haruhiko Kuroda in Hyderabad on Friday.

India calls for Asian free trade initiative

AGENCE France-Presse
Hyderabad, May 5

PRIME MINISTER Manmohan Singh called for a "pan Asian" free trade area embracing major economies to drive the region's growth as he opened the annual meeting of Asian Development Bank (ADB) here on Friday.

The Prime Minister's call came as thousands of anti-globalisation demonstrators shouting "ADB quit Asia-Pacific" staged a rally in the southern hi-tech city of Hyderabad.

"We are linking India into a web of partnerships with the countries of the region through free trade and comprehensive economic cooperation agreements," the Prime Minister told the meeting of ADB governors.

"This pan-Asian FTA (free trade area) could be the future

ADB MEET

of Asia and will, I am certain, open up new growth avenues," Singh said at the meeting attended by over 3,000 delegates including finance ministers and corporate heads.

The "web of engagements" could herald a free trade area embracing all major Asian economies and possibly extending to Australia and New Zealand, he said.

Singh's free trade pitch came as an ADB spokesman welcomed an announcement by Asean members along with China, Japan and South Korea that they would study the creation of a single Asian currency akin to the euro.

The ADB has been spearheading proposals for the

creation of an Asian currency unit or ACU to bolster monetary stability, spur regional growth and even out disparities.

"The European style of integration seems to have the greatest potential for realising the dynamic benefits of a common trade area," ADB president Haruhiko Kuroda said.

Oil prices pose problem

Finance minister P. Chidambaram said rising oil prices could be a deterrent to global and regional expansion and add to widening global payment imbalances.

"Asian economies will need to be watchful and policy-makers must continue to pursue sound macroeconomic policies and structural reforms to sustain growth and weather economic shocks," Chidambaram said.

06 MAY 2006

Envoys embarrass

MEA needs some cleansing

Handwritten notes: J. G. Singh, 5.8, 2/19

It is just as well that India's image abroad is only partially fashioned by its diplomatic missions else we could be cutting an even more sorry figure in the wake of recent disgraceful developments. While from across the diaspora there have ever been complaints of indifference when the assistance of our embassies and high commissions has been sought by those in difficulty, and we have countless other examples of less-than-efficient pursuance of national interests, little can be more shocking than the conduct of the former envoy to New Zealand and the involvement of a senior official in human trafficking. Not that the suspect role of the former Minister for External Affairs in the Iraq scandal was elevating. Just what kind of an impression has been created by the display of defiance from our man in Wellington (not to mention his wife) can be assessed from the under-statement, possibly tongue-in-cheek, of the observation of that country's prime minister that it was "unusual" should cause some ears to burn in South Block. For while in the past the poor showing of some political appointees to ambassadorships has been bad enough, the persons now under the scanner - the ex-minister included - are all career-diplomats. Members of Indian Foreign Service which projects itself as the cream (since soured?) of all civil servants. What a come down!

Now it is true that every family has its proverbial black-sheep and that all IFS officers cannot be placed in a single bracket, it is also an open secret that there are several instances of misdemeanour that have been noted within the ministry, but have been hushed up. Therein lies the origin of the trouble. Whether it is a mistaken sense of loyalty to the service, or an overall decay of professional and personal standards is of little consequence. The failure to ensure discipline has cost the country a huge price. At a point in time when India seeks to establish its global "presence", exert its influence and assume a degree of responsibility in international interaction its executors of foreign policy have done distinct disservice. The damage caused by a Harish Dogra or a Rakesh Kumar is incalculable. South Block had better pull up its sock lest it lets down the nation even further.

Handwritten: 21 APR 2006

THE STATESMAN

PANEL'S 4TH REPORT ■ Concern over farmers committing suicide

Draft on national policy for farmers focuses on debt trap

SONU JAIN

NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

IN their fourth report submitted to the government on Thursday, the National Commission on Farmers laid down the first draft on a national policy for farmers. The draft, to be finalised in 2007, provides detailed policy measures to bring farmers out of the debt trap which has pushed some of them to commit suicide.

"So far there has been no comprehensive policy for farmers. We need to mainstream human dimension in all farm policies, specially women in agriculture," said M S Swaminathan, chairman of the Commission.

It expresses concern over the recent spate of suicides by farmers. "Ending this chapter in our



Highlights of the draft

- To end an era of farmers' suicide and to restore pride
- To complete land reforms
- To enhance livelihoods by reinforcing packages of technology, techno-infrastructure, services, public policies and home and external trade
- To introduce measures which can help attract and retain youth in farming and confer the power of scale to small and marginal farmers.

national history must be the first and foremost task of the government," says the report.

NCF urges the state governments and all concerned "not to sweep the underlying causes for the increasing number of farmers suicides under the carpet and not to delay action on its recommendations..."

The draft policy stresses developing and introducing a "livelihood security package" for farmers by providing them with a choice of technology according to agro-ecological conditions and market demand.

The NCF will hold one such programme in Nagpur on May 1 when Village Knowledge Centres

will be set up where widows/children of farmers who have committed suicide will help spread the right information on credit, insurance and trade literacy.

Hope-generation teams will be set up by agricultural universities which will start functioning immediately. Scholars and teachers will spend time in suicide hot-spots and spread a message of confidence among the farmers.

The NCF will hold regional consultations with the state government, farmers organisations including women's organisations in May and August this year. The revised second draft will be included in the final report to be presented in October this year.

It is likely to be put up to the Cabinet in early 2007.

Recalled envoy to New Zealand returns today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

INDIA'S envoy to New Zealand is making it difficult for himself besides embarrassing New Delhi which recalled him recently on professional grounds.

However, stories about how the Ambassador feels he has been wronged are out in the New Zealand press, prompting South Block to remind him that they need him back here by Saturday.

India's High Commissioner to New Zealand Harish Dogra had refused to accept the recall order and instead demanded Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran's resignation. But, sources said, he has conveyed now that he will be here by Saturday.

A letter by Dogra to Saran following his recall has been circulated in the New Zealand media. The note charges the Foreign Secretary with "impropriety" and "contravening human rights". He claims enough ground had not been given for his recall and that this was all a partisan act.

When the MEA contacted him about these reports, he claimed no role and went on to add that he was surprised as to how these reports had appeared. In fact, he seemed to indicate that possibly New Delhi had a hand in getting all this out to embarrass him.

"Circulation of such scurrilous material is not becoming of a senior member of the Foreign Service," an MEA spokesperson said about the action of the envoy whose recall was ordered in early March.

According to the letter, quoted in the New Zealand media, Dogra described his recall order as "ill advised and

illegal". He accused Saran of "violating the very basic principle of natural justice" and felt sufficient reasons were not given to call him back.

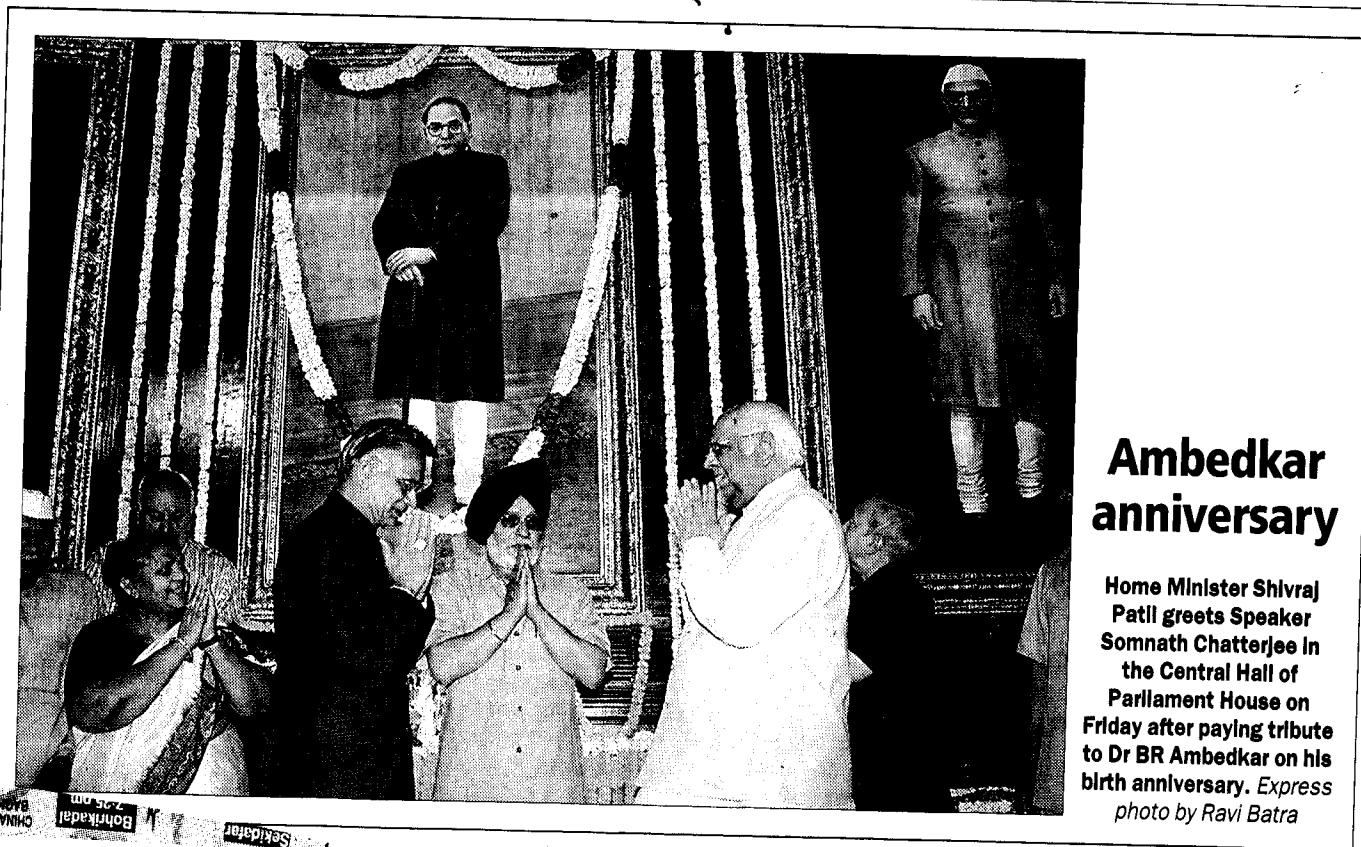
"You have played with my integrity and my honour by these innuendos and slander through gossip leaks. Fairness demands that either you prove your charges or submit your resignation," he allegedly wrote in his letter. Saran, he says, had made India a "laughing stock" by recalling him and thus humiliating an Indian envoy.

But Dogra had attracted several complaints from the local Indian-origin population. What prompted all this was a string of actions denying visas to important people from either side. He, sources said, would use his own discretion on who should get visas. Besides, there had been reports against his conduct which are currently under examination.

In any case, a recall is not necessarily a sacking order. But by going public, Dogra has taken off the veil that could have given him an impression of dignity. In all likelihood, he will be asked to proceed on leave immediately on his return and an inquiry instituted.

For the IFS, this the third case of improper conduct within the last month. Recently, Ambassador to UAE C. M Bhandari had mixed a family function with the Republic Day celebrations by issuing invitations for the personal affair on a card bearing the Ashoka Chakra. He was reprimanded by the government.

Secretary (Economic Relations) in the MEA Rakesh Kumar has been booked by CBI in connection with a human trafficking case.



Ambedkar anniversary

Home Minister Shivraj Patil greets Speaker Somnath Chatterjee in the Central Hall of Parliament House on Friday after paying tribute to Dr BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary. Express photo by Ravi Batra

India grants \$50 m more as assistance to Afghanistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, APRIL 10

INDIA today announced an additional assistance of \$50 million to Afghanistan, taking the total aid to the war-torn country to \$650 million. The two countries also signed three MoUs in the areas of education and rural development after talks between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and visiting Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

Karzai invited Indian investment in his country, specifically for setting up production facilities that would cater to his country and Central Asia. The two leaders also discussed terrorism and agreed to pool knowledge and experience to fight it. "Terrorism today is a menace which plagues many countries... Terrorism has acquired a new dimension," Singh said.

"We will cooperate with any nation that cooperates with us to fight terrorism... All countries of

the region are affected and I hope all countries of the region will join hands to fight the menace," Karzai said. He said terrorism was afflicting the whole world, and India and Afghanistan were the worst victims. He said in this region, every country is affected by terrorism, including the "brothers in Pakistan".

"Afghanistan has every reason to work with India, rest of the international community and our neighbours to get rid of it," he said.

Karzai pointed out that his

country had recently witnessed bombings of schools, infrastructure and other developmental projects aimed at halting reconstruction work. He said his country was discussing this issue with Pakistan and hoped that "eventually an effective way" would be found to fight the menace.

India and Afghanistan also decided to set up a joint committee of commerce ministers to review implementation of bilateral preferential trade agreement and pro-

Singh said there were "some security concerns" with regard to the Indian personnel engaged in construction of Delaram-Zaranj National Highway in Afghanistan and Karzai had assured him that effective measures will be taken to ensure their protection.

On Pakistan's denial of transit facility for Indian goods to Afghanistan, Singh said he had earlier raised the issue with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf

and now asked the Afghan President to use his good offices with Islamabad. Karzai said the transit facility was "extremely significant" for India, Afghanistan and Pakistan and the rest of the region.

The Afghan President said he had already discussed the matter with "brother Musharraf". He said Pakistan had already allowed transit of Afghan goods to India and hoped that such a facility will be allowed "very soon" for Indian goods to his country and beyond.



President Abdul Kalam, PM Manmohan Singh and Afghan President Hamid Karzai in New Delhi on Monday. Express photo

CPI(M) counters Congress charge of "communalising foreign policy"

Wrong to give 'communal' tag to critics of Government's 'volte face' on Iran and alliance with the U.S.

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Continuing its attack on the "pro-United States" foreign policy, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) said the Congress cannot wish away the charge that the United Progressive Alliance Government had gone back on its word of pursuing an independent foreign policy by branding those who oppose it as "communalising foreign policy."

Congress president Sonia Gandhi in her letter to workers published in the March issue of party organ *Sandesh* talked about the opposition to the Government's strategic tie-up with the U.S. "It is indeed sad that some parties have tried to communalise our foreign policy for short-term electoral gains," she

mocracy noted in its column captioned 'Comment.'

It said that ever since the Left parties opposed the Government's vote against Iran in the IAEA board meeting in September 2005, "the right wing media has been conducting a campaign that the Left parties and the Samajwadi Party are 'communalising' foreign policy." The Samajwadi Party and the Left

jointly organised a massive rally in Lucknow in November 2005, which was followed by a series of public meetings and seminars all over the country.

'Outright falsehoods'

A section of the media such as *The Indian Express* branded the Lucknow rally as a "Shia rally" and said the Shia clergy were on the stage. "These were outright

falsehoods. The campaign for an independent foreign policy drew widespread support and popular response. Faced with this response, even the Prime Minister's office began briefing the media about the danger of 'communalising' foreign policy. This has found an echo in the Congress leadership," the *People's Democracy* article noted.

It said that after the Iran issue, the Danish newspaper cartoons on Prophet Muhammad became an international issue, with big protest rallies organised by Muslims in India from February 2006. While it is true that some fundamentalist elements sought to utilise the issue for their purposes, there was genuine anger against the cartoons. All secular parties, including the Congress, had condemned them.

The political campaign conducted by the Left and other secular parties against the Government's stand on the Iran nuclear issue and subsequently during the Bush visit is intentionally being mixed up with protests by Muslims against the cartoons.

'Widespread misgivings'

"The Government and the Congress should realise that there are widespread misgivings about the overall strategic partnership which the UPA Government has forged with the Bush administration in India. By branding them as 'communalising foreign policy' they cannot wish away the charge that the UPA Government has gone back on the pursuit of an independent foreign policy," it said.

The Congress leadership

should ponder over why more people across religions and communities felt the UPA Government's current pro-American disposition was a betrayal of India's anti-imperialist and non-aligned traditions.

Imperialist power

The article said as far as the Left was concerned, the U.S. was an imperialist power that oppressed countries and peoples of all faiths. Wherever U.S. imperialism trampled on peoples' rights and sovereignty, the Left would be resolutely opposed to it.

The CPI (M) will not be deterred by talk of communalisation of foreign policy, which is but a cover for those who cannot justify capitulation to U.S. imperialism, it said.

Manmohan: not kowtowing to U.S.

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“Nuclear agreement is not a surrender”

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Asserting that India was not “kowtowing” to the United States, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Tuesday said engagement with the U.S. did not mean that the country was surrendering its national interest.

“It is in our national interest to engage with the U.S., which is a superpower. It thinks globally and acts globally. But we state our position. Last July while visiting Washington, I said that [the] invasion of Iraq was a great mistake,” Dr. Singh told the Rajya Sabha.

“Any notion that the new nuclear deal we have with the U.S. amounts to surrender of our independent thinking and autonomous decision-making process is totally misplaced,” he said replying to a discussion on the working of the External Affairs Ministry.

“Not apologetic”

Urging the members to judge the United Progressive Alliance Government (UPA) by the “totality of results achieved by us and not by [the] changes that have come about,” Dr. Singh said the Government was not “apologetic” about forging new relations with the U.S. that provided more space and greater elbow

room for economic development and ensuring energy security.

The Prime Minister’s assertions were aimed at rejecting the criticism by the Opposition as well as the UPA Government’s Left allies of the new-found closeness with the U.S.

India’s independent foreign policy was rooted in the pursuit of enlightened national interest. Since the time of Pandit Nehru, India had laid stress on evolving its policies in the “dynamic world” but the fundamental objective remained grappling with poverty and disease, which afflicted millions of its citizens. “We still have miles to go. Our foreign policy should also help in [the] removal of poverty in [the] shortest possible time; if [the] international environment supports us, we must take advantage of it.”

Economic growth

The economic growth rate was seven to eight per cent, and it was feasible to take it to 10 per cent with some more support and foreign capital. The U.S., the European Union, Russia, Japan and China were willing to “absorb our exports and give space for larger import of new technologies.”

Dispelling fears of India associating itself with any move at regime change in the region, Dr.

Singh emphasised: “Certainly, we are not part and parcel of any attempt to change regime.”

Though it was a discussion sponsored by the Opposition, its benches remained by and large unoccupied during Dr. Singh’s 45-minute reply.

The Prime Minister said India’s relations with the U.S., Russia, China and France had improved a great deal during the past two years of the UPA regime. On India-China relations, he expressed the hope that a solution to the “difficult” boundary issue would emerge. Chinese President Hu Jintao would visit the country later this year.

Assuring the members that the Government was pursuing a “pro-active role” with India’s neighbours for a prosperous, inter-connected South Asia, Dr. Singh said Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia would visit India later this month. The two countries would have candid discussions on bilateral issues.

On ties with Pakistan, he said the two countries were committed to resolving all issues, including Kashmir, through dialogue.

“Provocation by terrorists is not going to weaken our resolve to improve our relations with Pakistan or deal with anyone who brings harm to our secular fabric.”

15 MAR 2006

Pro-US tilt in Iran issue draws CPM ire

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI

THE CPI(M) has handed out yet another yellow card to the Centre for the "pro-US orientation" in the foreign policy designed by the UPA, especially with regard to Iran.

However, the party has chosen to post-date the warning till Assembly Elections conclude in the five states.

With the Centre seeming intent on putting through a number of policy decisions regardless of the Left's opposition, the CPI(M) central committee, which met over the weekend, decided that the time had come to review the current political situation.

However, it settled on waiting till after the Assembly polls in West Bengal, Kerala and the other states.

Outlining the reasons for the growing rift between the Centre and the Left, CPI(M) general secretary Prakash Karat said UPA was keen on going ahead with its airport modernisation plan, opening up of retail trade to FDI and a 'pro-US' in foreign policy.

"On a number of policy matters, the UPA government is going ahead despite opposition by us and other parties.

The CPI(M) will work with other parties to raise these matters inside and outside Parliament and chalk out the future course of action after the Assembly elections," Mr Karat added.

Singling out the Iran issue, Mr Karat berated the government for being silent despite the issue being shifted to the UN Security Council.

"US undersecretary Nicholas

Burns has said the US worked with various countries on the Iran issue. He mentioned India specifically," Mr Karat said, leaving little doubt about the biggest sticking point in UPA-Left relations.

"The central committee strongly deplored the course adopted by the Manmohan Singh government in voting twice in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) board in September 2005 and February 2006, which made India party to the Iran nuclear issue being referred to the UN Security Council.

"This is a basic departure from our independent foreign policy," a party statement issued on Monday said.

Mr Karat dubbed this "new direction" in foreign policy as a "breach" of the National Common Minimum Programme. He added his party was "totally opposed" to the strategic partnership with the US, India's participation in the US-led democracy initiative and the Indo-US CAE forum.

He described the strategic alliance as US "cover for advancing its hegemonic aims and interference in countries to promote regime change".

The statement said the "breach" of foreign policy was a "serious matter".

A few days ago, the party had warned the government of "serious consequences" in the wake of Iran's referral to the UN Security Council.

CPI(M)'s decision to oppose the UPA's policies "more assertively" both inside and outside Parliament and forge joint platforms with other parties on issues such as Iran and FDI in retail seem like the first instalment of this warning.

Govt-Left ties hit a new low

By Akshaya Mukul/TNN

New Delhi: Eerie silence, long statements and open resentment of UPA's foreign policy is all too evident in the growing chasm between the Left and the government. With no backroom channel operating between the two on the foreign policy front, it is guessing time for the government as CPM plays its cards close to the chest. As indications and subtle threats go, CPM is merely saying that it is not only against communalism but also imperialism. "We will do everything to counter imperialism," a party leader told TOI on Monday, reminding what Left and other parties, opposed to UPA's foreign policy, can do, if need be.

Refusing to get drawn into the political repercussions on UPA government vis-a-vis nuclear deal and Iran issue, the senior leader

FOREIGN POLICY

said: "Let us see. On Tuesday we will comment on the nuclear deal after the PM speaks in parliament."

On Iran, CPM would like to wait and watch. The senior leader said that in all likelihood there would be no voting in IAEA on Tuesday. "Iran might be asked to comply with certain regulations and it would be given some more time. We know for sure that Indian government is worried about the consequences that might follow if there is a voting. Therefore, it is working towards its postponement," the senior leader said. The senior leader said CPM would work assiduously to see that the pro-US course of foreign policy is reversed. "It would take time. But it would happen," he said.

Admitting that the UPA-Left relationship has hit a new low, the senior leader clarified: "So far there has been no attempt to convince Left on the series of Indo-US agreements." He said that party's politburo and central committee would also discuss the foreign policy at its meeting beginning Friday.

While reserving its comment on the Indo-US nuclear deal till the PM makes a statement in Parliament on Tuesday, CPM is right now focussed on Bush visit, pointing out loopholes in the joint statement issued during his recent visit. The party also took exception to Bush's call for a regime change in Cuba, Iran, Syria and Zimbabwe in his Purana Qila speech. In fact, CPM MPs Nilotpal Basu and Dipankar Mukherjee asked PM Manmohan Singh in Rajya Sabha if India is part of the international design for regime change in Iran and elsewhere. PM firmly denied any such move.

Delhi wants more time for Tehran

As IAEA board meets, PM tries to clear air over India's stance

NILOVA Roy Chaudhury
New Delhi, March 6

AS THE International Atomic Energy Agency's board of governors met on Monday to review, among other things, the status of Iran's nuclear programme, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told Parliament that India did not favour a confrontation or "coercive" methods to settle the problem. Instead, though India was not a key player in the negotiation efforts, it was working to find "mutually acceptable compromise solutions".

"We remain hopeful that solutions acceptable to all sides will be found", Singh said, replying to the debate on India's vote at the IAEA in February. Speaking of the meeting in Vienna, for which he is under intense pressure from allies to not go against Iran, Singh said it was "as yet not clear in what manner this issue will be taken up" by them.

It is unlikely there will be another vote, sources said, but more time will be sought by Russia to pursue the dialogue for a suitable solution with Iran. The Russian proposal seeks to take Iranian nuclear fuel to be enriched on Russian soil, allaying suspicions — particularly of the US-led western nations — that Tehran is clandestinely working to build a nuclear weapon.

India's approach in dealing with the issue, the PM said, "will be to pay due attention to our relationship with Iran, the need to maintain peace and stability in the Gulf region and safeguarding our own security".

Referring to his conversation with President Vladimir Putin of Russia on Saturday, Singh said, "We do not favour confrontation, rhetoric or coercive measures as these only exacerbate tensions in the region and beyond."

Meanwhile, Mohammed El Baradei, head of the IAEA, expressed cautious optimism about the chances of an international agreement to defuse concerns about Iran's contentious nuclear activities that would make UN Security Council action unnecessary.



Bruised and bitter

Hope at IAEA as US warns

VIENNA: The IAEA board is unlikely to discuss the Iran issue until Tuesday or Wednesday. IAEA chief ElBaradei suggested the UN Security Council might not need to get involved. "I am still hopeful that an agreement could be reached", he said.

- US envoy to UN John Bolton warns of "painful" result if Iran does not halt N-enrichment plan
- At IAEA meet Iran's team head Javad Vaidi said he expected a compromise

Give space for diplomacy on Iran N-issue: PM

7/1
7/3
J. Foreign Policy *ADT* *DPB*

New Delhi: Seeking more time for diplomacy to work on the Iran nuclear issue, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Monday said India remained "hopeful" that mutually acceptable compromise solutions would be found and confrontation avoided at all costs.

Spelling out India's stand ahead of the crucial IAEA meeting, Singh also made it clear that India was not part of any international effort on regime change in the region.

Replying to the debate on India's vote at the IAEA on Iran's nuclear programme in Parliament, he said "We remain hopeful that solutions acceptable to all sides will be found." Brushing aside Left accusations of bowing to US pressure, he bluntly said "No one can dispute that it is government's duty to take a position on such matters after a dispassionate examination of facts, keeping in mind our national interests." He said there can be no two opinions that government should not take pre-determined positions or positions at the behest of other nations. "Government has precisely done this," he said.

Gurudas Dasgupta, CPI, and Subrata Bose, CPM, as also Kharbala Swain, BJP, had contended in the Lok Sabha that foreign policy should not be based on the position of other countries but should be guided by national interests.

Responding to clarifications in the Rajya Sabha, he said "We are not part of any international effort for any regime change in the region." He said the government's sincere



Australian PM John Howard (right) is greeted by Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on Monday

desire was that the issue should be resolved without any recourse to coercive methods and any sort of confrontation and that diplomacy should be given adequate space.

On Monday's meeting in Vienna of the IAEA board of governors, Singh said "It is as yet not clear in what manner this issue will be taken up by them." He said the IAEA resolution adopted last month mentioned certain steps that Iran and the international nuclear watchdog would be taking.

The 35-member IAEA board had on February 4 adopted a resolution, supported by India, to report the Iran nuclear issue to the UN Security Council but had decided to

IAEA meet begins

Vienna: The UN nuclear watchdog opened a meeting of its board of governors on Monday that could lead to punitive action against Iran over its atomic programme, which the West fears is hiding weapons development. The IAEA's 35-nation board is considering a report by its chief Mohamed Elbaradei, in which he said Iran was defying IAEA calls to halt uranium enrichment and should cooperate fully with inspectors. *Agencies*

put off any action till IAEA chief Mohd El Baradei submitted his report this month on Iranian compliance of its nuclear safeguards resolution. "Government's approach will be based on our consistent policy of promoting efforts for a resolution of issues through dialogue and discussions," Singh said.

Noting that there have been discussions between Iran and Russia in the efforts to explore various options, Singh, who spoke to President Vladimir Putin on Saturday night, said "We do not favour confrontation, rhetoric or coercive measures as these only exacerbate tensions in the region and beyond."

He said "India has consistently stated that all sides must work to find mutually acceptable compromise solutions, and that confrontation should be avoided at all costs. For this to be possible, time must be given for diplomacy to work," he said. *Agencies*

PM speaks to Putin: IAEA meet on Iran

6/3
Foreign Policy
New Delhi: On the eve of the crucial International Atomic Energy Agency meeting on the Iran nuclear issue, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has spoken to Russian President Vladimir Putin during which he welcomed the efforts of Moscow to address Teheran's nuclear programme through dialogue and consultation.

"The leaders exchanged views in the context of the forthcoming meeting of the board of governors of the IAEA on Monday. Prime minister welcomed Russia's efforts to address the issue related to Iran's nuclear programme through dialogue and consultations," a PMO spokesman said. The telephone call, which lasted for 20-minutes, was initiated by the Indian side, he said.

While Iran has welcomed the Russian offer for a joint venture on Russian soil for uranium enrichment, it has made it clear that it would not be intimidated and has been insisting on some enrichment even if it is only on a small scale research level.

Iran and Russia had a series of talks in Moscow earlier this month during which Moscow offered setting up a joint venture on Russian soil and insisted on restoration of status quo by Teheran that existed

before last vote by the UN nuclear watchdog's board of governors meeting in Vienna.

The conversation between the Prime Minister and the Russian President took place late Saturday night and the two leaders discussed the implementation of areas of cooperation identified during their last summit meeting in Moscow in December 2005 ahead of the forthcoming visit of Russian prime minister Mikhail Fradkov later this month.

Putin also briefed the PM about the G-8 summit being hosted by Russia in St. Petersburg in July 2006 and Singh conveyed acceptance of President

Putin's invitation to participate in a broader dialogue with G-8, the spokesman said.

The discussion between Singh and Putin also covered India-Russia bilateral economic and commercial relations and the PM expressed satisfaction that the bilateral agreement on Russia's accession to the WTO had been signed recently in accordance with his commitment to him (Putin) during their last meeting, the spokesman said. The two leaders also discussed the on-going co-operation in civilian nuclear energy. Agencies

EXCHANGE



06 MAR 2006 THE TIMES OF INDIA

Foreign policy puts nation first: PM

24/3
Statement News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb. 23. — The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, today made an impassioned plea to the Opposition to respect the tradition of national consensus on foreign policy which, he said, has the national interest at its core.

"While the instruments of our policy and the tactics and strategy we adopt may change with time, the values in which they are embedded are universal and will remain true for all time," Dr Singh told the Lok Sabha in his reply to a marathon discussion on the motion of thanks to the President's address.

Dr Singh rejected the charge of dual power centres in the government and sought to turn the tables on the BJP. "May be they think other parties func-

Govt denies 'interference' charge

NEW DELHI, Feb. 23. — The government today rejected the BJP charge of interfering in the functioning of the CBI in the Babri Masjid demolition case against Mr LK Advani and said its communication to the agency in the matter was prompted by court strictures. Parliamentary affairs minister Mr PR Dasmunshi also dismissed charges that the Congress-led coalition had attempted to protect Ottavio Quattrocchi, an accused in the Bofors case, whose bank accounts in London were unfrozen recently. He said the NDA while in power had not been able to collect evidence against the Italian businessman. Mr Dasmunshi said the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court in July, last year had made "serious observations" in the demolition case while setting aside the Rae Bareilly Trial Court order discharging Advani in the case. — SNS

tion like theirs, allowing shadowy organisations to interfere in the work of elected governments. That has not been the culture of the Congress party". He was clearly alluding to the widespread impression that the BJP is remote controlled by the RSS.

He said that quite often a question is raised about Prime Ministerial authority "as if we live in some

totalitarian system, in some fascist state, where authority has to be visibly asserted to command compliance. That may be the culture and outlook of those who keep raising the issue of authority".

Turning to the domestic scene, he maintained that the Justice Rajender Sachar committee had been set up to gather "reliable accurate data" on the

economic and social status of Muslim minorities in the country and regretted the "unfortunate tilt" given to the exercise. The Justice Sachar committee would complete its work and it would be discussed in the House in detail, he said.

About the coming budget, he said it would address the FDI issue and promised that there would be no hasty decisions on opening up the retail sector to FDI. "We will not act in haste in this matter. We will examine this issue in all its dimensions including its effect on livelihood and discuss this widely before taking any decision. There is no hurry on this". He described the import of wheat as a precautionary measure to ensure that the minimum level of buffer stock was maintained.

CPM says govt, Opp one on ruining debate

NEW DELHI, Feb. 23. — With both Houses of Parliament witnessing repeated adjournments, the CPI-M today accused both the government and the Opposition of trying to "scuttle" any discussion on the Indo-US or Iran nuclear issues before the upcoming visit of US President Mr George W Bush. "Probably the government does not want to have a discussion on these issues before the visit of Mr Bush and the BJP also does not want to be seen supporting the government's line on the matter. If this is true, then it is really very unfortunate," CPI-M leader Mr Sitaram Yechury said.

Observing that Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh was slated to have made a statement on the Iran nuclear issue today, he said now with such a situation continuing, the discussion cannot be taken up today. "It cannot be held tomorrow owing to the Rail Budget, nor on 27 February because of presentation of economic survey and the next day owing to the General Budget. President Bush would be here on Tuesday," Mr Yechury said.

About the government's "interference" in CBI functioning, he said: "We have sought a short-duration discussion on the matter as the government says it has sought information, while the opposition claims it was interfering. The matter should be clarified". — SNS

Security concerns shaped Iran policy, says PM

Statesman News Service

Teheran defiant

NEW DELHI, Feb. 17. — Perhaps in its first forthright and unambiguous official response, India today said it had voted against Iran in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as it could not afford to “turn a blind eye” to the security implications attendant upon the matter.

The clear assertion came in a statement made today by the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, in both Houses of Parliament on the anti-Iran vote issue that had infuriated the Leftist parties, the UPA government’s supporters voluntarily unrepresented in the Cabinet. India’s stand was determined by the “objectives of upholding Iran’s rights and obligations and our security concerns arising from proliferation activities in our extended neighbourhood,” Dr Singh said.

“The source of such clandestine proliferation

TEHERAN, Feb. 17. — Iran today confirmed it had injected gas into centrifuges, a crucial step in the process of uranium enrichment, a high-ranking official told the state television. “Yes, we have injected UF₆ gas into a limited number of centrifuge machines but it is even less than what is needed for a pilot project,” said Gholam Reza Aghazadeh, the head of the Iranian Atomic Energy Organisation, without elaborating on the number of the centrifuges. — AFP

of sensitive technologies lies in our own neighbourhood. India cannot afford to turn a blind eye to the security implications of such proliferation activities,” he said. The obvious allusion was to Pakistan.

“Let me begin by affirming that India’s vote on the IAEA resolution does not, in any way, detract from the traditionally close and friendly relations we are privileged to enjoy with Iran. Indeed,

India-Iran ties, as we have repeatedly emphasised, are civilisational in nature. We intend to further strengthen and expand our multifaceted ties with Iran for mutual benefit,” he said.

Dr Singh said India would support diplomatic efforts in the run-up to an IAEA meeting in March to reach an amicable solution. Such a “sensitive issue” involving the rights and international obligations of a sovereign nation could only be addressed through “calm, reasoned diplomacy and the willingness on all sides to eschew a confrontation and seek acceptable compromise solutions”, he said in an apparent bid to cool Left tempers.

The BJP today said it had nothing against the Prime Minister’s “argument” on the need to curb Iran’s nuclear programme but lamented the government’s failure to take the Opposition into confidence before deciding on voting against Iran.

Security concerns shaped Iran vote: PM

Says India Will Push For Diplomatic Efforts To Resolve Crisis Over Teheran's N-Ambitions

New Delhi: Maintaining that security concerns had "shaped" the government's position on the Iran vote the IAEA, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday said India could not afford to turn a blind eye to the implications of clandestine proliferation of sensitive technology in its neighbourhood.

With the Left parties breathing down the government's neck warning against an anti-Iran vote at the March 6 meeting, he said the sensitive issue of Teheran's rights could be addressed through calm and reasoned diplomacy and India would support diplomatic efforts in this regard, drawing its friendly relations with all the key countries involved.

Taking the first opportunity to clarify the Centre's position on the vote on Iran's controversial nuclear programme in the IAEA, he said in a statement in both Houses of parliament that despite successive reports of the IAEA director general there were many "unresolved" questions on key issues relating to Iran's



91 *92* *for security*
"The objectives of upholding Iran's rights and obligations and our security concerns arising from proliferation activities in our extended neighbourhood have shaped our position"

nuclear programme. "These include the use of centrifuges imported from third countries and designs relating to fabrication of metallic hemispheres. Members are aware that source of such clandestine proliferation of sensitive technologies lies in our neighbourhood, details of which have emerged from successive IAEA reports," the PM said.

Expressing confidence that the House would agree that India could not afford to turn a blind to security implications of

such proliferation activities, he said, "The objectives of upholding Iran's rights and obligations and our security concerns arising from proliferation activities in our extended neighbourhood have shaped our position."

He claimed that India's was always in favour of promoting all efforts to find a solution, based on acceptable mutual compromises, in which Iran's interests and the concerns of the international community would be addressed. He

pointed out that the resolution on the Iran vote not only had the support of the Big Five, including Russia and China, but also NAM and developing countries.

He said India was hopeful of a positive outcome of the discussions between Iran and Russia, which has offered to locate a joint venture on its soil to address Iranian needs for enriched uranium, provided it suspends its enrichment programme to increase international confidence regarding unresolved questions.

He reiterated India's conviction that such a sensitive issue concerning rights and international obligations of a sovereign nation could only be addressed through calm, reasoned diplomacy and the willingness on all sides to eschew confrontation and seek compromise solutions.

"We are deeply concerned by the escalating rhetoric and the possibility of a confrontation over this issue. Tensions in this region—where our vital political, economic and security interests are involved—affects us directly," he said. Agencies

SP threatens no-trust motion over Iran

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 15 FEBRUARY

THE Samajwadi Party today threatened to bring a 'no-confidence' motion against the Congress-led UPA government if it once again voted against Iran at the March 6 meeting of the IAEA.

The SP decision, coming a day before the Budget session kicks off, has ranged political players in opposite camps — UPA and BJP on the one side and SP and the Left on the other — setting the scene for a stormy debate on the Iran question in Parliament. The SP's move will fuel further speculation about the emergence of a third front, with the party planning a joint rally with the Left on March 2 in New Delhi. US president George Bush is expected to officially begin his visit on March 2.

"On Iran issue, Congress-led government had twice voted against Tehran ignoring the established policies of the country. There will be another IAEA meeting on March 6 and we warn the government that we will bring a

no-confidence motion if this time too it votes against Iran," SP general secretary Ram Gopal Yadav said after a meeting of the party's parliamentary board.

The SP, which has 40 MPs in the Lok Sabha, has attempted to counter the BJP's move of supporting the government on Iran, though UPA and BJP together far outnumber others. It however allows the Left to keep a tight leash on the government, though the Left parties have said they have no plans of supporting a non-confidence motion on Iran. With the Left planning to rework its strategy depending on the March 6 vote, the issue could snowball into a serious embarrassment for the government if the Left abstains during a no-confidence motion.

When asked if bringing a no-confidence motion meant withdrawal of support from the UPA, Mr Yadav said: "No-confidence means, we have no faith in the government." On the BJP's support for the Congress on Iran, he said those accusing the SP of having links with saffron forces were now collaborating with them.

SINGH ■ 'Methods must be evolved to respond to changing realities' Foreign policy will change from time to time: PM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

PRIME Minister Manmohan Singh, who is having to weather all kinds of charges and allegations on the foreign policy front, today made it clear that the means India adopts to attain its foreign policy objectives "will, of course, change from time to time".

At a time when he is preparing to make a statement in Parliament on the Indo-US nuclear deal, the Prime Minister further elaborated that these means and methods will have to be "evolved" while India responds to "changing realities of an ever-changing world".

Underlining the challenge of ensuring freedom to make policy decisions in a world

which is fast becoming more interdependent, Manmohan said, "While the instruments of our policy and the tactics and strategy we adopt may change with time, the values in which they are embedded are universal and remain true for all time."

The PM—who was speaking at the foundation laying ceremony for the new complex of the Ministry of External Affairs named after Jawaharlal Nehru—said Nehru's idea of non-alignment was based on the "principle that we were not aligned with anyone against anyone but only with our values and national interest".

Manmohan went on to explain that non-alignment was not an "empty slogan" and added that it was an "expression of our enlightened national interest and continues to be so even today".



national priorities and concerns. There cannot be a disconnect between domestic capabilities, national aspirations and external policies".

Highlighting the need for improving relations with neighbouring countries, Singh said a stable and

peaceful South Asia is India's "top priority concern" as the future of all these countries is interlinked. The Indian economy, he went on to add, has taken "outward orientation" following the reforms in the 1990s. With India looking at maintaining a growth rate of 8-10 per cent, he said there was now a foreign policy challenge to obtain access to "markets, sources of energy and investment and advanced technologies".

The business of diplomacy, he felt, needs to engage more with the "diplomacy of business". Given India's rising demand for energy, the "uncertainty" of hydrocarbons supplies and concerns about global warming, issues of energy security have important implications on foreign policy.

Nuclear Iran not in India's interest: BJP

Vote at IAEA "mismanaged"

Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI: The Bharatiya Janata Party on Tuesday said it did not think a nuclear Iran was in India's interest. It, however, criticised the "gross mismanagement" of India's vote at the International Atomic Energy Agency against Teheran and the "unacceptable unilateralism" being pushed in the region by the United States.

The party did not oppose the India-U.S. nuclear deal of July 18, 2005 *per se*, but said the "flexibility" needed for "maintaining a minimum credible deterrent" must be retained to deal with "contingent situations" and the "changing threat scenario."

India should not accept any curb or cap on production of fissile material, but this could be "re-examined" when the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament evolves a fissile material cut-off treaty, and all nuclear weapon states agree to adhere to it.

The signals from Washington, it said, indicated that the U.S. wanted to cap India's fissile material production.

Leader of the BJP in the Rajya Sabha Jaswant Singh issued separate statements, clarifying the party's views on the two issues. The statements were critical of the Government on the handling of the Iran issue.

On Monday, after the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh made its position clear, it became obvious that the BJP would fall in line. The only problems that the RSS and the BJP seem to have with the United Progressive Alliance is that they perceive India's vote followed the U.S. pressure and India's fissile material production will be capped.

The statements followed a meeting of the executive of the party's parliamentary wing on

• **India must maintain minimum deterrent**

• **Must not accept curbs on production of fissile material**

Tuesday. There was a 90-minute meeting of senior leaders on Monday at the residence of the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha L.K. Advani and Mr. Jaswant Singh were present at both meetings. Party president Rajnath Singh was present at the Monday meeting and Deputy Leaders in both Houses of Parliament V.K. Malhotra and Sushma Swaraj attended the Tuesday meeting.

The BJP found Iran guilty of "clear violation of its obligations and commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty."

The BJP took the Government and the Left to task for "permitting themselves to be hustled" into "voting in a particular manner" and "generating an impression that India has surrendered its sovereign rights."

Recalling the statements coming emanating from the U.S. and its Ambassador here, the statement said it appeared that as if New Delhi was being threatened. This "heightened [the] suspicion that the U.S. wishes to establish a hegemonistic relationship with India."

The party demanded a "full explanation" from the Government on both issues and criticised it for not holding consultations with the Opposition.

Finally, it welcomed the scheduled visit of U.S. President and hoped that the ties between the two nations would be back on a "balanced, and an equal and even keel."

Meanwhile, RSS backs Govt on its Iran stand

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

UNDER attack from its Left allies and the SP for its stand on the Iran nuclear issue, the UPA government today received support from an unexpected quarter: the RSS.

RSS spokesman Ram Madhav said: "It is not in our interest to have another nuclear power in our vicinity." The RSS, he said, had "no problem over India voting along with the P-5 countries at IAEA, but the Government should have presented the country's case better by underlining Pakistan's role as a supplier of nuclear technology to Iran."

Saying the Congress should have tried to build domestic consensus on the issue, he called for a Parliament debate on the matter.

The Sangh-line limits the options available to the BJP. BJP president Rajnath Singh has been saying that the Government should have convened an all-party meeting on the issue. Party spokesman Prakash Javadekar said, "India should appear to be pursuing an independent foreign policy, which is not the case under the UPA."

UPA-Left truce: will debate Iran, n-deal, won't back SP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

THE Government today conceded to the Left demand for a debate in Parliament on the Iran issue, FDI in retail and Indo-US nuclear cooperation after Left parties put the UPA on the defensive at their coordination meeting, saying their suggestions on key issues were ignored.

The Government was told that the Left would make common cause with other non-BJP parties and raise issues inside and outside Parliament. No mention was made of a Third Front but the Government believes that there

will be informal floor coordination inside Parliament on matters raised by the Left. "We decided to convey our deep concern at the way the Government functions. Since the time the Left-UPA coordination meetings started, we gave 19 written notes on a range of issues and the overall assessment is that the exercise has not been productive," CPM general secretary Prakash Karat said.



At the meeting

Nervousness in CPM as EC deletes 1 million names in West Bengal

SUBRATA NAGCHOU DHURY
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 13

THE final publication of West Bengal's electoral rolls will take place on February 22 but the Election Commission, creating a record of sorts, has already deleted one million names from the state's voters' list.

Some 7,80,000 names were struck off suo motu by the Commission. These names were those of the dead or voters who simply didn't exist. Another 2,20,000 names were deleted as per the standard procedure of scrutiny un-

der Form No. 7.

With the Commission pressing for more corrections, the ruling CPI(M) is in a flap. In the state assembly, CPI(M) MLA and former minister Narayan Biswas alleged that a concerted effort was being made to delete the names of "refugees" from electoral rolls.

But the Commission seems determined to set the rolls right this time. Never before had it gone in for suo motu deletion of names on such a large scale. During the last summary revision in 2005, names deleted by the Commission totalled only 2,14,000 as against 7,80,000 already this year.

"It's been a difficult task," says Debasish Sen, West Bengal's Chief Electoral Officer. The process of deletion of names

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EC deletes 1 million names in West Bengal

depended largely on information provided by locals and neighbours. Election department officials say the visit, in two phases, by 19 EC observers was largely aimed at correcting the rolls. The Commission directed that the rolls be cross-checked with death registers of each unit—panchayats in case of villages, municipalities, corporations in case of urban and semi-urban pockets.

"Yes, it is mandatory now to have death and birth registers in villages," says Debasish Sen. The EC directive, he says, has been implemented and proper record keeping has begun. The other interesting method adopted for verification of names on the list was "roll recital". Tried for the first time, it was very effective. The list was read out before the entire village and corrections made in the presence of election department staff.

বাগ দেখালেও ইরান-অনাস্থার পক্ষে ভোট দেবেন না বামেরা

নিজস্ব সংবাদপাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৩ ফেব্রুয়ারি: সমন্বয় কমিটির বৈঠকে গিয়ে নিখল রাগের বাহিঃপ্রকাশ ঘটিয়ে ফিরে এলেন বাম নেতারা। চলে আসার আগে অবশ্য বাজেট নিয়ে শীঘ্রই আর একটি বৈঠকে যাবেন বলে তাঁরা সরকারপক্ষকে জানিয়ে এসেছেন। আর সরকারকে এই মর্মেও তাঁরা কেনও অবস্থাতেই সংসদে ভোটাভূটি চাইবেন না।

তবে সরকার তাঁদের কথা না-শানায় তাঁরা যে খুবই ক্ষুব্ধ, সেটা আজ স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন বামেরা। তাঁদের কথার ধার এতটাই বেশি ছিল যে, প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহকে এক সময়

ক্লান্ত হই, তিনি 'মার্কিনপন্থী' নন, তিনি যা করছেন তা 'দেশের স্বার্থে'। তা ছাড়া, কংগ্রেসের অনমনীয় মনোভাবের জন্য কনটিক বিজেপির দখলে গিয়েছে, বামেরদের এই যুক্তি অস্বীকার করে সনিয়া গান্ধী বলেন, তাঁরা সমস্ত রকম সমঝোতার জন্য তৈরি ছিলেন।

এ সর্বের মধ্যেও প্রধানমন্ত্রী বামেরদের সতর্ক করেন, ইরান নিয়ে যেন সাম্প্রদায়িকতায় ইন্ধন জোগানো না হয়। এই প্রসঙ্গে বিজেপি বাদে বাকি যে কোনও দলের সঙ্গেই বামেরা হাত মেলাতে। রক্ষণাত্মক বামপন্থীরা জানিয়ে দেন, বিজেপির সঙ্গে যাওয়ার প্রসঙ্গই ওঠে না।

সমন্বয় বৈঠকের বাইরে অবশ্য এ

শুক্রই দেহানি। তাঁরা বলেছিলেন, ইরান নিয়ে ভারত যেন এমন ডাবে ইউরোপ ও আমেরিকার সঙ্গে ভোট না দেয় যাতে বিষয়টি নিরাপত্তা পরিষদে যায়। কিন্তু সরকার ঠিক সেটাই করেছে। এই অবস্থায় ইরান প্রস্তুতি তাঁরা সংসদে তুলছেন, যাতে এ বিষয়ে বিভিন্ন দলের মত কী, তা স্পষ্ট হয় এবং বিদেশনীতির প্রশ্নে মতামত কতটা দ্বিধাবিভক্ত তা-ও বোঝা যায়। প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় জানতে চান, কী ভাবে বিষয়টি তোলা হবে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী স্বতঃপ্রসঙ্গিত ভাবে বিবৃতি দিতে পারেন বলেও সরকারের পক্ষ থেকে জানানো হয়।

সরকার তাঁদের তোয়াক্কা করছেন না, এমন একটা ধারণা ছড়িয়ে পড়ার পরে

এ দিন বামেরা নির্দিষ্ট আলোচাসূচি অনুযায়ী এগোননি। বাজেট নিয়ে কথা হবে বলে সরকারপক্ষ আশা করছিল। কিন্তু সেই আলোচনা না-করে বামেরা বোঝানোর চেষ্টা করেন তাঁরা কতটা ক্ষুব্ধ। সরকারপক্ষ অবশ্য এই মনোভাবের অর্ধ ঠিক বোঝেনি। বৈঠকের পরে চিদম্বরম জানান, বামেরা সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে কোনও অনাস্থা আনবেন না বলে জানিয়েছেন। সেই সঙ্গেই তিনি জানিয়ে দেন, সরকার স্বাধীন বিদেশনীতি অনুসরণ করে চলেছে। তবে এই যুক্তির সঙ্গে যে বামেরা পরোপরি একমত হচ্ছেন না, তা তিনি স্বীকার করে নেন।

সমন্বয় কমিটির বৈঠকের শেষে

যৌথ বিবৃতি প্রকাশ না হওয়া থেকেই বাম-সরকার মতভেদ স্পষ্ট। প্রকাশ করাট, এ বি বর্ধন, অবনী রায় ও ডি রাজা আল্লাদা সংবাদিক বৈঠক করেন। সেখানে তাঁরা জানান, সরকারের জনপ্রিয়তা যে কমছে সেটা জানিয়ে এসেছেন তাঁরা। সংসদে আলোচনার পরে ৬ মার্চ সরকার আই এ ই এর বৈঠকে কী মনোভাব নিচ্ছে দেখে তাঁরা পরবর্তী পদক্ষেপ স্থির করবেন।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আমন্ত্রণ সত্ত্বেও তাঁর সঙ্গে মধ্যাহ্নভোজনে না বসে আর এক দফা রাগ দেখিয়েছেন বামেরা। সেটা অবশ্য আগেই জানিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছিল। কাল শাসক জোটের জন্য ডাকা নৈশভোজেও তাঁরা যান্ধেন না।

ইরান নিয়ে সঙ্ঘের সমর্থন মনমোহনকে

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৩
ফেব্রুয়ারি: ইরান প্রক্ষে বামদলগুলির
চরম বিরোধিতার মধ্যেই আজ এক
অপ্রত্যাশিত ক্ষেত্র থেকে সমর্থন পেয়ে
গেলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ।

আর সেই সমর্থন কিছুটা হলেও
অস্বস্তিতে ফেলে দিল প্রধান
বিরোধী দল বিজেপিকে। কারণ,
সমর্থনের হাতটা এগিয়ে এসেছে
আরএসএসের দিক থেকে।

সঙ্ঘ নেতৃত্ব আজ প্রকাশ্যেই
জানিয়ে দিলেন, ইরানের পরমাণু
গবেষণা নিয়ে ইউপিএ সরকারের
নীতিতে তাঁদের সাথ রয়েছে। তাঁদের
বক্তব্য, ঘাড়ের কাছে একটি দেশ যদি
পরমাণু শক্তির হয়ে ওঠে, তবে জাতীয়
নিরাপত্তার দিক থেকে তা উদ্বেগের।

তবে সরকার-বিরোধী চরিত্র বজায়
রাখতে সঙ্ঘ নেতৃত্ব সমালোচনার
পথও খোলা রেখেছেন। কিন্তু
তাঁদের সেই সমালোচনা নেহাতই
পদ্ধতিগত ত্রুটিবিচ্যুতিতে সীমাবদ্ধ।
আরএসএস মুখপাত্র রাম মাধব
বলেন, জাতীয় স্বার্থে এত বড় সিদ্ধান্ত
নেওয়ার আগে সরকারের উচিত ছিল
সব ক'টি রাজনৈতিক দলের সঙ্গে
আলোচনা করা। বস্তুত, এটাই পরম্পরা
হওয়া উচিত। কিন্তু সরকার তা
ধর্তব্যের মধ্যেই আনেনি।

আরএসএসের অভিযোগের মূল
সূত্রটা অবশ্য পাকিস্তানের পরমাণু
গবেষণাকে ঘিরে। সঙ্ঘের মুখপাত্র
বলেন, "শুধুই ইরানে পরমাণু

গবেষণার বিপক্ষে ভোট দিলে আপত্তি
নেই আমাদের। কিন্তু বাস্তবে মার্কিন
চাপের কাছে নত হয়েছে ভারত।
ইরানের পরমাণু গবেষণা নিয়ে
বিভ্রাটের মূলে যে পাকিস্তান, সেই
ব্যাপারে নয়াদিল্লি এক বারও
আন্তর্জাতিক মহলে সরব হয়নি। অথচ
আদত ঘটনা হচ্ছে, অর্থের বিনিময়ে
তেহরানকে পরমাণু প্রযুক্তি সরবরাহ
করেছে ইসলামাবাদ।"

সঙ্ঘের সঙ্গে এই নিয়ে বিজেপি'র
যে বড় রকমের মতবিরোধ রয়েছে, তা
নয়। কিন্তু যখন বামদলের মতো
ইউপিএ'র ঘনিষ্ঠ সহযোগীরা
সরকারের বিপক্ষে, সেই সময়
স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই তাদের প্রধান লক্ষ্য,
সংসদে বিষয়টি নিয়ে মনমোহনদের
কোণঠাসা করা। প্রাথমিক ভাবে
বিজেপি নেতৃত্ব নীরবতা বজায়
রাখলেও তলে তলে সেই প্রস্তুতিই
চালাচ্ছেন। প্রাক্তন নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা
ব্রজেশ মিশ্র সম্প্রতি একটি
মার্কিন-বিরোধী বিবৃতি তৈরি করে
দলীয় সভাপতি রাজনাথ সিংহকে দিয়ে
এসেছেন। কৌশল ঠিক করতে আজ
সন্ধ্যায় অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর
বাড়িতে শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বের বৈঠকও হয়।

কিন্তু এর মধ্যেই রাম মাধবের
আজকের মন্তব্যকে ঘিরে গেকুয়া
শিবিরে অস্বস্তির মেঘ। তবে বিজেপি
সূত্রের খবর, এই অস্বস্তিকে আমল না
দিয়ে বরং সরকারকে চাপে রাখার
কৌশলেই অনড় থাকছেন তাঁরা।

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

KARAT DEMANDS HOUSE DISCUSSION ON IRAN

Left is hurt but rules out no-trust

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb. 13. — With the cracks in their relation showing more than ever before, the Left parties and the ruling Congress today held a tense meeting during which the Left made it clear to the Manmohan Singh government what it felt about the Centre's stand on the Iran nuclear programme and its economic policies.

What came as a relief to the Congress-led UPA government was the Left's assurance that it would not support any no-confidence motion against the government in the Lok Sabha. This, despite its fierce opposition to the government's anti-Iran vote and its drive to attract FDI to the retail sector and for airport modernisation.

The Left brass told the Prime Minister and the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, that they reserved the right to work out a strategy with other non-BJP, like-minded parties on Iran and FDI in retail to raise the issues in and outside Parliament. The Congress-Left Coordination Committee meeting, held at Dr Singh's official residence, lasted about one-and-a-half hours.

The CPI-M general secretary, Mr Prakash Karat, later said there was no question of moving or supporting a no-confidence motion against the government, which the Samajwadi Party had threat-

'What third front?'

NEW DELHI, Feb. 13. — The Congress and the NCP today rejected the Left's idea of a third front, dubbing it as a "pipedream" which had no place in the current situation. "All such speculation is not based on reality," the Congress spokesman, Mr Abhishek Singhvi, said. Echoing similar sentiments, the NCP president, Mr Sharad Pawar, said in Patna that the formation of a third front comprising Left parties would remain a "pipedream". The CPI-M general secretary, Mr Prakash Karat, reportedly said today that his Guwahati statement had been misrepresented. — SNS

ened to table, although he said the Left would "decide" on its next course of action after the 6 March International Atomic Energy Agency meet.

In what suggested a new low in Left-UPA ties, the government spokesperson and the Left representative did not hold the customary joint post-meeting briefing at the conclave venue.

Flanked by other Left leaders, Mr Karat expressed his displeasure with the way the government had chosen not to take the Left's counsel in a number of matters. On behalf of the government, the Union finance minister, Mr P Chidambaram, said, though: "We made an honest attempt to arrive at a consensus on a number of issues."

Mr Karat said the Left parties had submitted 19 written

notes to the Coordination Committee. "Our assessment is that the exercise had not been as productive as it should have been," he said.

On the voting on Iran, the Marxist leader pointed out that the government had been repeatedly siding with the USA and the EU-3 at the IAEA meets, "preparing the ground for Iran's referral to the UN Security Council". "The Left parties told the government that a discussion on Iran should take place in Parliament," Mr Karat said, adding: "So, the people know about Parliament's stand."

Opposing the government's decision to privatise Mumbai and Delhi airports for modernising them, Mr Karat said there were indications that the bidding process could have been compromised. He added that the government's decision to allow 51 per cent FDI in single-brand retail category had been taken despite the Left's stiff opposition to it.

Mr Chidambaram said the Centre was ready for a discussion on Iran in Parliament. Maintaining that the government was committed to pursuing an independent foreign policy, he also said: "Iran is a difficult issue but we have to tread carefully." The finance minister asserted that the government faced no threat from any quarter — whether Right or Left.

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LOOKING AHEAD: *India must not allow itself to become an accessory to a crime against Iran*

Not another Iraq

BY PREM SHANKAR JHA

IN THE Indian elite there is a palpable irritation with the Left over its decision to demand a full debate in Parliament on the UPA government's second vote against Iran in the IAEA last week. Although this falls a good way short of its earlier threat to withdraw its support, few doubt that a debate in which the Left pits itself openly against the government for the first time will seriously weaken the alliance and shorten its life. When the Sensex has just crossed the 10,000 mark and India is the new flavour of the year for international investors, this is the last thing the country needs.

The Left's critics are ascribing its decision to stubbornness, an inflated sense of its own importance and a failure to recognise the 'paradigm shift' in foreign policy after the end of the Cold War and the dawn of a unipolar day. But while these sentiments may well have played some part in shaping its decision, in truth what the Left has done is give the UPA government an honourable way out of becoming an accessory to the second greatest crime of the 21st century. This will be a military strike, either by the US alone or in collusion with Israel, on Iran.

If you ask a spokesman for the Indian government, he will vehemently deny the existence of any such danger. On the contrary, he will claim that India has helped to postpone, and possibly prevent, military action by insisting that "confrontation should be avoided and any outstanding issue ought to be resolved through dialogue". The resolution, he will point out, "has won a period of six weeks, before the March IAEA board meeting, for diplomatic efforts to continue and to get negotiations between the EU-3 and Iran back on track". Indeed, so sanguine is the Indian government that its spokesman has not hesitated to assert that India's vote against Iran "should not be interpreted as in any way detracting from the traditionally close and friendly relations we enjoy with [that country]".

There have been few worse examples of double-think in foreign policy. This pious optimism presupposes that Iran will bend before the 'will of the international community' and do all of the five things that the IAEA resolution has commanded it to do. These are: re-establish the full and sustained suspension of all uranium enrichment activity, including research; reconsider (i.e., stop) the construction of a heavy water moderated research reactor;



ratify and implement the Additional Protocol to its Safeguards Agreement; in the interim, continue to act in accordance with that protocol; and implement 'transparency measures', which extend beyond the formal requirements of the Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol and include such access to individuals, documentation, dual-use items, military-owned workshops, and research and development as the IAEA may request in support of its ongoing investigations. Only if it does not, will the question of UN sanctions, and the US's repeated threats of military strikes become relevant.

But the Indian government knew perfectly well, even before the vote, that Iran would not agree to these conditions. Every responsible Iranian leader, from its ambassador at the IAEA to its foreign minister and president, had warned the world that if the IAEA referred it to the Security Council, it would immediately terminate its voluntary observance of enhanced safeguards and resume full-scale uranium enrichment and associated activities. That is what it has since done.

It also knew that the problem did not lie with President Ahmadinejad or Iran's revolutionary council. The Iranian government could not have acted in any other way because it has broken no law. The nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, of which it is a signatory, expressly gives it the right to enrich uranium provided it does so under IAEA safeguards. Iran had gone a step further and accepted enhanced safeguards. The NPT moreover, does not, in any of its clauses, prohibit a signatory from carrying out research that would give it the ca-

capacity to make nuclear weapons. (The West tried to plug this loophole at the 2005 NPT review conference, but failed). The law, therefore, remains that research that could create the capacity to build a bomb is not illegal and proscribed.

Iran went wrong, and aroused worldwide suspicion of its intentions, when it tried to keep the facilities in which it was carrying out the research hidden from the IAEA and, therefore, outside the safeguards regime. But even the conservative *Financial Times* conceded, in an editorial on February 6, that Iran's determination to acquire and develop dual-use technology is fuelled by its acute apprehensions about its security. It has tried, the paper concedes, to assuage these by means of diplomacy, but "America rebuffed Iran's overtures for a 'grand bargain' in 2003 and Europe failed to act on pledges to discuss security in the subsequent deal the EU-3 reached with Teheran on a nuclear moratorium."

In insisting that Iran give up the right to enrich uranium altogether, what the US, EU and now the IAEA are asking it to do is surrender its sovereignty. No Iranian government that did so in response to a direct threat would survive for very long. The West may find it convenient to discount the power of nationalism and, therefore, turn a blind eye to the dilemma in which it has placed the Iranian government, but Indian policy-makers can hardly have forgotten the potent force that brought them independence. They, therefore, know perfectly well that in Iran's position they would have done exactly the same thing.

The West is now on a collision course with Iran. By ratcheting up

its threats, the US and the EU are making it less and less possible for the regime to climb down. The February 4 vote has, therefore, set in motion a chain reaction that will end in a military strike on Iran. That will be another gross violation of Article 2 of the UN charter, and will destroy what is left of the Westphalian State system. But it would not end there. Iran would retaliate by turning Iraq into a living hell for the foreign troops that remain. Since it would almost certainly do this by unleashing a new wave of Shia 'terrorism' in the country and forging an alliance with the Sunnis in central Iraq, that could easily become the excuse for more American or 'allied' military strikes on its defence establishments and its infrastructure on the Kosovo and Iraq models. No one can predict where this escalation will end.

The Indian spokesman's assertion that India's vote will not affect its friendly ties with Iran is pure poppycock. The truth is that India has already stumbled into becoming an accessory to a future military strike on its nuclear installations. What is far worse in doing so, it has tacitly endorsed the US's invocation, in its 2002 National Security Doctrine, of the right to attack or invade another country merely on the suspicion that it might one day pose a threat to its national interest. That doctrine erases the distinction between aggression and self-defence and, therefore, the very basis of international law. It spells the end of a world order based on law.

Manmohan Singh will do well to remember an argument he had used with great effect when justifying the signature of the Uruguay Round trade agreement: in any society, it is the poor who need the shelter of the law more than the rich. In terms of military, economic and technological power, India is still among the poorer nations of the world. By signing on to the US's decision to rule the world on the basis of vague consensus among the rich nations backed by the threat of military force, it is chopping down the bough on which it sits.

By insisting on a parliamentary debate, the Left has given the government one final chance to get out of a self-destructive commitment in an honourable way. For no one, even in the US Congress, can reasonably expect it to ignore the wishes of the people, and face defeat and a possible fall from power, on this issue.

CPM presses for Mulford recall

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Feb. 10. — Ahead of the Assembly elections, the CPI-M today stepped up its pressure on the Centre on two fronts — the Iran nuclear vote and the recall of the American Ambassador to India.

The party warned the government that if it voted against Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency meeting on 6 March (on referring the Teheran's nuclear programme to the UN Security Council), it would "seek the support of other parties within and outside the UPA... to put the government in the dock in Parliament". Referring to a letter Ambassador Mr David Mulford had reportedly written to West Bengal chief minister Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee protesting against certain comments allegedly made by him, CPI-M general secretary Mr Prakash Karat said: "His conduct is not befitting of Ambassador. He cannot just start writing letters to chief ministers." (Mr Bhattacharjee refused comment on whether he had received a letter or whether he had

indeed referred to the USA as an "organised pack of killers" as alleged by Mr Mulford.)

What could be confirmed, however, was that Mr Bhattacharjee would visit Vietnam for two days at the end of this month. The choice of Vietnam is being perceived as a political statement in view of its prolonged and bloody battle against the USA. The CPI-M also announced that it would, with other Left allies, organise nationwide protests on 2 March when the US President Mr George W. Bush visits India.

Asked what he meant by "putting the government in the dock", Mr Karat replied: "We will seek discussion in Parliament." The Politburo did not discuss withdrawal of support from the Centre, Mr Karat said, and confirmed that their "new strategy" would be to put pressure on the UPA — with other allies "inside and outside the UPA" that it can convince — to ensure the Prime Minister and his Cabinet don't take major decisions whether on Iran, FDI in retail or airport modernisation but be forced to take the issues to Parliament.

10/02/2005

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10/02/2005

Rajnath for all-party meet on Iran

"There should be a debate on the Iran issue in Parliament..."

LUCKNOW: Accusing the United Progressive Alliance Government of lacking a clear-cut view on policy matters, including Iran, BJP president Rajnath Singh on Thursday sought an all-party meeting on the Iran issue.

"The foreign policy of the country is no longer independent... Neither Parliament nor the Opposition parties were taken into confidence on the Iran issue," he told reporters here.

"There should be a debate on

the [Iran] issue in the parliament... A meeting of all the parties should be convened to discuss the issue," he said, adding the BJP would be raising the issue in Parliament.

Consensus was lacking over the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal, signed last year, with even the leading nuclear scientists of the country not satisfied with it, Mr. Singh said.

The BJP leader said Pakistan was now putting conditions for

continuing the peace process and added that the "very sovereignty of the country is in peril."

Asked whether the BJP would support the no-confidence motion to be brought by the Samajwadi Party in the Lok Sabha on the Iran issue, Mr. Singh evaded a direct reply and said the BJP too wanted to bring no-confidence motions on a number of issues and "they should support us." Mr. Singh accused the UPA Government of showing "utter disregard" to the Constitution and referred to the proposal for bringing legislation for Muslim reservation in Andhra Pradesh

and restoring the minority status to Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).

Referring to the role of Bihar and Jharkhand Governors, the BJP president said even the Supreme Court had passed adverse remarks against them.

The UPA Government's decision to import wheat amounted to cheating the farmers of the country as the wheat season was approaching, Mr. Singh said. — PTI

See also Page 5

2006

Let Parliament debate Iran issue: Left

Says India's vote against Iran "not in conformity" with the pursuit of an independent foreign policy

K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI: The Left parties on Sunday said India's vote against Iran in reporting the nuclear issue to the United Nations Security Council was "not in conformity" with the pursuit of an independent foreign policy and maintaining good relations with Teheran. It demanded a full debate in Parliament on the issue.

"We are confident that when the matter is discussed objectively and dispassionately in Parliament, the Government of India will listen and take a decision [ahead of the March 2 meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency]," Communist Party of India (Marxist) general

secretary Prakash Karat told presspersons after a meeting of four Left parties here.

The Left reiterated that India should neither be a party to any referral to the Security Council nor countenance any recommendation for taking action through the Council. They said the resolution adopted by the IAEA board on Saturday to "report" the Iran nuclear issue to the Council was questionable. Such a move would not be helpful now in resolving the issue through negotiations within the framework of the IAEA, a joint statementsaid.

"In this context, the stand taken by India is not in conformity with the pursuit of an independent foreign policy and the main-

tenance of good relations with Iran, which is in our national interests, about which the Left parties have repeatedly pointed out."

NAM role hailed

The Left appreciated the role of the non-aligned group of countries, who made sustained efforts to dissuade the IAEA from adopting threatening moves against Iran. They said the Director-General's report would be taken up in the March meeting of the IAEA and the stand taken by India at the meeting would be crucial.

On the Manmohan Singh Government's "regrettable stance of succumbing to U.S. pressures" on the issue and the stand India

should take in the IAEA meeting, the Left demanded a full debate in the budget session of Parliament.

On the stand of the Opposition Bhartiya Janata Party, Mr. Karat said the party now talked of an independent foreign policy. When in power it did everything to undermine the foreign policy and turned completely pro-United States.

Airports privatisation

On the issue of airports privatisation, the Left took stock of the developments and economic policies. They expressed deep concern at the manner in which the Government was going ahead with the policies of privatisation and the recourse to for-

tain direct investment in certain vital sectors.

Mr. Karat said that some policies were contrary to the National Common Minimum Programme and the interests of the people. The Left leaders would discuss the matter among within their parties and take it up at their next meeting.

The Sunday meeting came in the backdrop of New Delhi's vote against Iran as also the move to privatise the Delhi and Mumbai airports, which led to a strike by employees of the Airports Authority of India.

Photograph, more reports on Page 12

THE HINDU

6 FEB 2006

Iran issue should be resolved within IAEA, says Manmohan

Denies Delhi is under pressure to reach accord with the U.S. on separation of nuclear facilities

Special Correspondent
9 February 1974

NEW DELHI: Denying that there had been any deviation from his Government's commitment to follow an independent foreign policy, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said here on Tuesday that he was committed to promoting India's "enlightened national interest." This would be done by strengthening relations with all parts of the world.

In a wide-ranging press conference, which lasted more than an hour-and-a-half, Dr. Singh fielded questions virtually on every aspect of foreign policy. Asked what India's stand would be at the February 2 meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency, he said he still believed the Iran nuclear issue was "a matter that should be resolved

through diplomacy and dialogue." As a signatory to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, Iran "is entitled to all the rights that go with its membership and also has a responsibility to fulfil its obligations."

Efforts on in Vienna

Referring implicitly to the moves under way to refer Iran to the U.N. Security Council, the Prime Minister said that India would very much like to see the issue settled within the confines of the IAEA. "Efforts are on in Vienna to evolve a broad-based

consensus. Let us hope these efforts succeed."

On the Indo-U.S. agreement on civil nuclear cooperation, he denied New Delhi was under any pressure to reach an understanding with Washington on the separation of its nuclear facilities before President George W. Bush's visit to India in early March. "There are no deadlines as such," he said. "I'm not fixing a deadline. There are negotiations. What time they will take I cannot predict." He did stress, however, that India's emerging partnership with the United

States covered a wide range of issues and was not a "one-shot relationship based only on nuclear cooperation."

Nuclear fuel

At the same time, India needed civilian nuclear cooperation and his Government was committed to working with the U.S. and the Nuclear Suppliers Group to ensure that the discrimination the country had been facing since 1974 — in terms of being denied access to nuclear infrastructure and fuel — was ended.

In response to a question, Dr. Singh denied that the Government was lacking a clear policy on Jammu and Kashmir in contrast to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's penchant for "out of the box" thinking. There

were two aspects to the problem, one internal and the other external.

The internal aspect was to "create an environment where all people of the State feel a sense of belonging and participation." In this regard, he said he had held talks with those sections not satisfied with the status quo, such as the Hurriyat, Sajjad Lone and Yasin Malik. This process would continue.

As for the external aspect involving Pakistan, Dr. Singh said his Government was committed to finding "pragmatic, practical solutions" to all outstanding issues, including the problem of Pakistan.

He stressed that he did not have a mandate to negotiate away any territory but subject to this, solutions could be found.

Left ups the ante on Iran

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Jan. 27. — The uneasy Left-Congress relations could soon hit a new low as the Left parties today categorically asked the Congress-led UPA government not to support any move for dragging Iran to the UN Security Council.

The Left has been mounting relentless pressure on the Manmohan Singh government in the run-up to a crucial International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) meeting on Iran's nuclear programme, scheduled to be held in Vienna on 2 February.

The CPI-M general secretary, Mr Prakash Karat, has been in the forefront of this exercise.

After a meeting of their parties on the issue today, the Left decided to write to the Prime Minister asking him to ensure that India did not vote in favour of any resolution seeking to refer the Iran imbroglio to the UN body.

The Left also expressed strong resentment against the US Ambassador, Mr David Mulford's "arrogant effort" to influence India's stand on the issue asking the government to make public proposals handed to the USA about separating the country's civilian nuclear facilities from its military ones.

"We are going to write a letter to the Prime Minister telling him in clear terms that we do not want the Government of India to support or vote for any resolution that proposes to take the Iran matter to the UN-SC," the CPI general secretary, Mr AB Bardhan, said.

India, USA close to pact: Burns

WASHINGTON, Jan. 27. — A senior State Department official today said the USA and India were near an agreement on details for implementing their July accord on sharing civilian nuclear technology. "We are very close to an agreement," said under-secretary of state Mr Nicholas Burns. He said at a Press conference that the most difficult aspect of the negotiations had been finding a way to separate the civilian and military aspects of India's nuclear programme. — AP

Another report on page 2

Centre's assurance

The government today assured agitating employees of the Airports Authority of India (AAI) that it would discuss their "alternative plan" before making a final decision on awarding contracts for modernising Delhi and Mumbai airports.

The financial bids of pre-qualified bidders would not be opened before Sunday, and the AAI employees would be taken into confidence before, AAI chairman, Mr K Ramalingam, and AAI Board Member, Mr VDV Prasad Rao, told the workers, who had blocked the gates of the ministry headquarters for several hours.

Having wrested this assurance, the AAI Employees Joint Forum suspended their agitation to protest the proposed privatisation move.

THE STATESMAN

28 JAN 2006

Vote against Iran, or else: warns US

OUR BUREAU & PTI

New Delhi/Washington, Jan. 25: The US has warned that if India does not vote with it against Iran, the nuclear agreement between Manmohan Singh and George W. Bush could come unstuck.

David Mulford, the US ambassador, told PTI in an interview that the Indo-US nuclear deal would "die" if New Delhi supported Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) meeting on February 2 to decide if Tehran should be referred to the UN Security Council.

If a referral is made, Iran could face international sanctions over its nuclear programme.

The US "Congress will simply stop considering the matter", dealing a "devastating" blow to the landmark agreement announced last year when Singh was in the US, Mulford said, but claimed later that his remarks "have been taken out of context".

India may, however, be saved from taking the tough decision as the board of governors of IAEA — the UN's nuclear watchdog — is unlikely to refer Iran to the Security Council at the next meeting.

Sources at the UN said Mohamed ElBaradei, the IAEA's director-general, who had repeatedly cautioned the Americans against invading Iraq over Saddam Hussein's nuclear programme, was doing the same over Iran.

The sources said ElBaradei had let it be known that IAEA's comprehensive report on Tehran's nuclear programme would not be ready until the end of February.

Such a position can be frustrating for the White House,

which is keen to demonstrate that its writ still runs at international forums.

Mulford used a carrot-and-stick approach to get India on the US side. "We have made it known to them (New Delhi) that we would very much like India's support because India has arrived on the world stage and is a very very important player in the world," he said.

In the same breath, he implied that the Indian government was guilty of hypocrisy. "If it (India) opposes Iran having nuclear weapons, we think they should record it in the vote."

Mulford's task of delivering the Indian vote to Washington has become challenging not only because of the long-standing opposition from the Left against voting with the Americans against Iran, but also because of intense diplomatic activity by Tehran in recent days.

Its top nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani is in Moscow to move forward on a Russian offer to enrich Iranian uranium at plants in Russia as a way out of Tehran's confrontation with the West.

If India does not vote against Iran at the IAEA, Mulford narrated the consequences for the Bush-Singh nuclear deal, under which the US has agreed to civilian nuclear cooperation with India.

"I think the initiative will die in Congress. Not because the administration would want it to," he said.

India rejected the US attempt to link the fate of the nuclear deal to the Iran vote.

"The position that India will take on the issue at IAEA will be based on India's own independent judgement," the external affairs ministry said.



If Delhi decides not to vote for the Iran resolution... I think the nuclear initiative will die in Congress

— Mulford

THE TELEGRAPH

26 JAN 2006

India and talks on the nuclear issue

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India should be arguing that by not putting the faster breeder programme in its present phase under safeguards, it is actually serving non-proliferation objectives.

R. Ramachandran

ACCORDING TO news reports following the recent round of discussions in New Delhi between India and the United States around the Indo-U.S. nuclear agreement of July 18, 2005, progress seems to have hit a roadblock because the Indian position that the fast breeder programme cannot be placed under safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was not acceptable to the U.S. (see 'Safeguards for breeder reactors a key obstacle' and 'IAEA inspections will compromise breeder research' Siddharth Varadarajan, *The Hindu*, Jan. 21).

The argument of the Indian Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) has been that since the breeder programme – the 40MWth Fast Breeder Test Reactor (FBTR) at Kalpakkam and the 500 MWe upcoming Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) – is still in the R&D phase, there is no need to bring it under safeguards. "When the technology becomes mature it is a different story," Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) chairman Anil Kakodkar had said in an interview (see T. S. Subramaniam, *The Hindu*, Aug. 12, 2005).

However, this argument – which India seems to have continued to maintain even during last week's negotiations – has failed to impress Nicholas Burns, the U.S. Under-secretary of State for Political Affairs, who led the U.S. delegation. The issue is whether the programme is civilian or military and not whether it is R&D or established technology. Also, the 245 facilities that the U.S., as a nuclear weapons state, has offered for safeguards include many R&D facilities. It is another matter that the IAEA has decided to implement inspections only for four U.S. facilities, one of which (BWX Technologies Facility) may well be an R&D facility.

What India should be arguing is that by not putting the breeder programme in its present phase under safeguards, it is actually serving the non-proliferation objectives of the U.S. How is that?

India has an estimated total inventory of *unsafeguarded* plutonium stockpile of about 10 tonnes by reprocessing of the spent fuel from the *unsafeguarded* pressurised heavy water reactors (PHWRs). The PFBR fuel is a mixed oxide of this plutonium and depleted uranium again from the PHWRs. The first loading of PFBR will consume about 3-4 tonnes of this *unsafeguarded* plutonium. According to DAE scientists, for exigencies an equal amount of plutonium needs to be kept in the pipeline. This means that eight tonnes of the estimated stockpile of 10 tonnes would be earmarked for burning in the fast breeder reactor during its R&D phase.

However, if the PFBR is brought under safeguards, this un-safeguarded plutonium is released for weapon purposes because now India can shop around for plutonium. Plutonium from the dismantled weapons of the U. S. and Russia is now available in plenty. Indeed, now Russia is exporting such plutonium to Japan for burning in its breeder programme and also for use in mixed oxide (MOX) fuel development. In fact, India should consider offering PFBR for safeguards under an assurance of supply of plutonium under safeguards for the breeder programme with the caveat that safeguards on the breeder programme would be terminated if and when such supply gets terminated for whatever reason.

It is not clear why the U.S. non-proliferation lobby is missing this argument and is bent on bringing the breeder programme too under safeguards. And assuming an average of about even 10 kg of reactor-grade plutonium per weapon, eight tonnes of *unsafeguarded* plutonium is a huge amount.

It is tempting to recall what Georges Vendryes, the father of the French fast breeder programme, said in response to the U.S. opposition to the development of the breeder cycle. "I do not understand these Americans. I cannot understand their opposition. In a breeder we are actually burning plutonium and that is good news for non-proliferation."

THE HINDU

On Iran, don't run

Tehran's being difficult again. New Delhi has to be tough, never mind vote bank calculations

NEW DELHI'S fervent hopes that Iran's proliferation will not complicate India's efforts to finalise the nuclear deal with the United States have now been dashed. Tehran's decision last week to renew activity at the Natanz uranium enrichment plant has triggered off a fresh international crisis. And the nature of New Delhi's decision at the International Atomic Energy Board of Governors next month would undoubtedly have a direct impact on India's own nuclear negotiations with the US and President George W. Bush's visit to India in a few weeks.

The logic of India's own national interest and Iran's continuing nuclear defiance would suggest that New Delhi continue to vote with the global mainstream. India had voted last September in favour of the resolution that censured Iran and asked it to abide by its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. At the same time, India had also insisted that diplomacy be given time to resolve the issue at the IAEA rather than the

United Nations Security Council, which could consider further measures against Iran. Tehran, however, has not used the intervening period to find a way out. Its rejection of a sensible Russian compromise which would have allowed it to have access to nuclear power reactors as well as atomic fuel, have left the international community with few options.

Although India, with a clean conscience, can support a decision this time at the IAEA to refer Iran to the UNSC, there are pressures on the Manmohan Singh to reverse its vote. The Communist parties' demand for a policy change is rooted in an ideological approach that has become irrelevant. A small section of the Congress party, too, has been having second thoughts. It has raised the bogey of losing political support among Shia Muslims. At a time when an irresponsible Iranian regime is rapidly isolating itself, it would be extremely perverse for India to sacrifice its national interest in the name of Congress Party's vote bank politics.

ইরান নিয়ে ভারতের উপরে চাপ বাড়ছেই

সীমা সিরোহি • রোম

১৪ জানুয়ারি: আশঙ্কটা দেখা দিয়েইছিল। এ বার তা দ্রুত সত্যে পরিণত হতে চলেছে। অর্থাৎ ইরান প্রক্ষে ভারতকে আরও এক বার 'শ্যাম রাখি না কুল রাখি' পরিস্থিতির মুখোমুখি হতে হচ্ছে।

ইরান প্রসঙ্গটি নিরাপত্তা পরিষদে তোলার ব্যাপারে ক্রমশ এককট্টা হচ্ছে আন্তর্জাতিক মহল। ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসের গোড়াতেই আন্তর্জাতিক পরমাণু শক্তি সংস্থা (আই এ ই এ)-র জরুরি বৈঠক ডাকা হতে পারে বলে ইঙ্গিত মিলেছে। সেখানে ভারতের ডোটের উপরে বিশেষ ভাবে নির্ভর করছেন মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশ।

মার্কিন উপবিদেশসচিব নিকোলাস বার্নস আগামী সপ্তাহে ভারতে গিয়ে ইরান প্রসঙ্গে তো কথা বলবেনই। অন্য দিকে সোমবারেই ভিয়েনা পৌঁছে যাচ্ছেন আন্তর্জাতিক নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক মার্কিন উপসচিব রবার্ট জোসেফ। সেখানে আই এ ই এ বোর্ড-সদস্যদের সঙ্গে তাঁর কথা হবে।

সেই দলে ভারতীয় প্রতিনিধি শীলকান্ত শর্মাও থাকবেন। শর্মা অবশ্য বলে রেখেছেন, ইরান-সমস্যাকে ভারত 'অত্যন্ত নৈর্ব্যক্তিক দৃষ্টিকোণ' থেকেই দেখছে। ভারত চায়, পরমাণু অস্ত্র প্রসার রোধ চুক্তিতে স্বাক্ষরকারী হিসাবে ইরান তার বাধ্যবাধকতা মেনে চলুক এবং সেই সঙ্গে ইরানের নিজস্ব অধিকারকেও সম্মান করুক। আন্তর্জাতিক মহল।

ইরানের প্রধানমন্ত্রী মাহমুদ আহমেদিনেজাদ আজ আবারও বলেছেন, ইরান বোমা বানাচ্ছে না। কিন্তু পরমাণু প্রযুক্তি হাতে রাখার পূর্ণ অধিকার তাদের আছে। এ নিয়ে আন্তর্জাতিক চাপের কাছে মাথা নোয়াতে রাজি নয় তারা। অর্থাৎ সব মিলিয়ে পরিস্থিতি যে দিকে যাচ্ছে, তাতে ভারতের পক্ষে নৈর্ব্যক্তিক থাকটা মুশকিল। আমেরিকা এবং ইরান, দু'তরফের সঙ্গেই ভারতের স্বার্থ জড়িয়ে রয়েছে। আমেরিকার সঙ্গে পরমাণু চুক্তি এবং ইরানের সঙ্গে গ্যাসপাইপলাইন চুক্তি, দুটোই ভারতের পক্ষে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। কিন্তু ঘটনাচক্রে ভারত-মার্কিন পরমাণু চুক্তির ভবিষ্যৎ এই মুহূর্তে অনেকটাই নির্ভর করছে ইরান প্রক্ষে ভারতের অবস্থানের উপরে।

নিকোলাস বার্নস এবং রবার্ট জোসেফ— যারা ইরান নিয়ে ভারতের সঙ্গে কথাবার্তা চালাবেন, তাঁরাই কিন্তু পরমাণু চুক্তির অগ্রগতির ব্যাপারেও অন্যতম প্রধান ভূমিকা নেবেন। কাল হোয়াইট হাউসের মুখপাত্র স্কট ম্যাককরনিক এক নিঃশ্বাসেই বলেছেন, বার্নসের ভারত সফরে পরমাণু চুক্তি এবং ইরান— দু'টি বিষয়ই প্রাধান্য পাবে। মার্কিন কংগ্রেসের পরমাণু-বিশেষজ্ঞ শ্যারন স্কোয়াসসোনি-ও (যিনি ভারতের পরমাণু ক্ষেত্র পৃথকীকরণ নিয়ে যথেষ্ট সন্দেহান) মনে করছেন, ইরান প্রক্ষে ভারত সমর্থন দেয় কি না, তা থেকে অনেক কিছু বোঝার আছে।

Dismantle terror infrastructure, Pak told

HT Correspondent
Hyderabad, January 22

THE CONGRESS has asked Pakistan to dismantle the "infrastructure of terrorism" on its territory to pave way for friendly relations, even while hoping that Iran's nuclear issue would find a mutually acceptable solution.

A draft resolution on "external security and international affairs" said that the Congress continued to have serious concerns about terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and wanted that country to respect the January 6, 2004 joint statement by the two countries in which it had committed itself not to allow its territory to be used for terrorism directed against India.

"The tragedy of the recent earthquake underscored our shared destiny as in the draft resolution pointed out and affirmed that India desires to have peaceful, friendly and cooperative relations with Pakistan as envisaged in the Simla Agreement of 1972.

In the draft political resolution issued earlier, the party urged the UPA government to press President Pervez Musharraf to deliver on his promise that Pak-

istan would not allow territory controlled by it to be used for heinous acts of violence against India.

Expressing concern at the acts of cross-border terrorism, the party commended the UPA government for its bold and creative steps in the management of human crisis caused by the "painful conflict" in Jammu & Kashmir.

The party hoped that the impasse on Iran's nuclear issue would be resolved through a mutually acceptable solution.

"India's difficult but principled stand on the issue of nuclear proliferation and the vote in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) caused a degree of disqui-

significant diplomatic achievement

■ The continuing political turmoil in Nepal was a matter of serious concern to India

■ The Congress noted that the UPA government worked for better relations with China. India and China have agreed to work together to realise the vision of the 21st century as an Asian century

GLOBAL OUTLOOK

military action and restoration of the democratic rights of the Iraqi people" and added that the secular fabric of Iraqi society must be preserved and protected.

The party noted that Afghanistan was fast emerging out of its prolonged trauma. India has supported the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan by providing extensive humanitarian financial and project assistance having pledged an additional financial assistance of \$559 million.

The Congress said that the continuing political turmoil in Nepal was a matter of serious concern to India. The party hoped that an early political settlement would be pursued within the parameters of multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy, in an atmosphere free from violence. The party also welcomed the recent democratic reforms in Maldives as well as the UPA government's initiatives to further consolidate the close relations between India and Bhutan.

Stating that the UPA government has steered the India-China relationship towards a strategic and cooperative partnership for peace and prosperity, the Congress noted that the two countries agreed to work together to realise the vision of the 21st century as an Asian century.

et among some sections in both countries. The matter came to vote despite strenuous efforts by India to avoid that eventuality".

The Congress also hailed the civil nuclear cooperation pact signed last year by India and the US as a significant diplomatic achievement. It said the agreement would be implemented in a spirit of transparency and reciprocity.

On Iraq, the Congress said it was categorically opposed to military intervention and decided against sending Indian troops to that country. Many other countries as well as United Nations shared India's reservations. The party hoped to see "a rapid conclusion to the aftermath of the

Dilemma over Iran's nuclear vote eases

By Chidanand Rajghatta/TNN

Washington: One of the two significant wrinkles creasing US-India ties ahead of President George Bush's visit in March has ironed itself out following the emergence of a near-universal stand by the world community against Iran's nuclear infractions.

India's dilemma whether to go along with Washington for a second time in referring Iran to the UN Security Council, mainly on account of domestic political pressure, has resolved itself following Teheran's defiant and hardline stance. Delhi's vote call has also been made easier by gratuitous and aggravating references by Teheran's top nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani to India's nuclear programme to justify Iran's stand.

The rationale of citing India's N-programme to duck Iran's international obligations has not gone down well with Delhi,



AHMADINEJAD: Making things easy for India

which was not a NPT signatory and, therefore, not a violator like Iran.

Taken together with the erratic pronouncements of the Iranian leadership on various issues (including a call for Israel to be wiped off the face of the earth), it makes it easier for the UPA government to go along with western powers in referring Iran to the UNSC, a decision that is expected to

India's dilemma whether to go along with Washington for a second time in referring Iran to the UN Security Council, mainly on account of domestic political pressure, has resolved itself following Teheran's defiant and hardline stance

figure in talks in New Delhi on Thursday with visiting US undersecretary of state Nicholas Burns.

India's predicament has also been eased by the evolving stance of Russia, Teheran's close supporter in the past, which earlier this week aligned itself closer with European powers in bringing Iran to book, although it is still opposed to a UN referral.

Only China, which depends heavily on Iranian oil and has heavy investments there, is a hold-out.

The IAEA board will meet on February 2 to discuss the referral issue. IAEA director-general Mohammed ElBaradei has also come out strongly against Iran. All this has made the passage of the US-India nuclear agreement a little smoother although New Delhi is bound to feel the pain of rising oil prices—which streaked past \$67 a barrel—as Iran threatens retaliation.

That leaves the issue of separation of India's civil and military nuclear facilities as the principle item in the agenda for Thursday's talks between Burns and his Indian counterpart, foreign secretary Shyam Saran, as they aim to set the stage for President Bush's visit. Both sides are tightlipped about where the nuclear separation matter stands.

► Deal possible: Burns, P 12

South Asia in deep freeze

THE big chill that has descended on North India has also begun to engulf India's relations with her key neighbours. India's emerging difficulties in the neighbourhood also threaten to mar the big bash that New Delhi is planning for President George Bush in a few weeks' time.

While the Bush visit promises to transform Indo-US relations and consolidate India's standing as one of the world's major powers, growing regional instability threatens to sink India back into the subcontinent's quagmire.

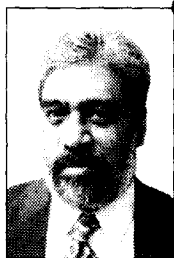
No great power has been able to sustain itself on the world stage, until it establishes primacy in its own neighbourhood. India's current attempts to promote regional stability and shared prosperity are being undercut by a series of developments.

Two years after it was unveiled at Islamabad in January 2004, the peace process with Pakistan has entered choppy waters as Musharraf fails to keep his word on putting an end to cross-border terrorism. As Musharraf increasingly becomes part of the problem rather than the solution in Pakistan, his credibility as an interlocutor for India is rapidly eroding.

In Nepal, India's attempts to nudge King Gyanendra towards political reconciliation have not succeeded and a four-month long ceasefire from the Maoists has come to an end.

The turbulence in Bangladesh is set to intensify this year as the nation prepares for a round of divisive general elections. The growing influence of Islamic extremism in Bangladesh is undermining peace in the region as well as Dhaka's immense potential to emerge as an important nation.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam is betting that India and the world no longer have the stomach to prevent it from carving out a separate state in Sri Lanka. Put another



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India's search for stability in its neighbourhood is going nowhere

way, the region's growing vulnerabilities look even worse. The process of internal democratisation that started a decade and a half ago has received huge setbacks in recent years.

Ethnic separatism, too, is re-igniting old passions, even as the post-9/11 international constraints on the sources of terrorism in the region have begun to weaken. The governments in the region have also failed to take full advantage of the possibilities for regional economic integration and globalisation.

As he headed to the South Asia summit in November, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh talked of the

tion in Sri Lanka in the late 1980s has sapped India's will to take hard decisions on managing regional crises. Looking away, however, is not an option, since every one of the conflicts across the borders has a way of impinging on India's own security.

Second, India is not in a position to deal with these challenges on its own. India has often stated that other powers should stay out of the subcontinent; but if India fails to take the leadership, it cannot stop others from acting.

In recent years, the US, UK and the EU have looked to Indian leadership in dealing with Nepal. Yet In-

India must find a way to balance the imperatives of promoting democracy in its neighbourhood with the necessity of engaging the regimes currently in power

danger of "failed states" in the region. While Singh's comment has drawn flak from the neighbourhood, it has hardly initiated a debate within the country.

Profound structural crises within the neighbourhood are at hand, even if state failure does not present itself immediately. Preparing for them must be at the top of India's strategic priorities. As the region tests India's diplomatic acumen, the popular focus will be on how India will deal with specific crises. But the real challenge lies in developing a set of principles which must guide its regional strategy.

First, is the importance of assuming leadership. The failed interven-

dia has found it hard to act in a timely manner. To be more effective in the region, India must deepen the dialogue on regional crises with the US and other major western powers, and initiate one with China.

Although India's regional security dialogue with the US has led to a better understanding on Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, discussion on the internal dynamics of Pakistan remains a taboo. As the political crisis in Pakistan deepens, India and the US need a substantive dialogue to develop an enduring framework for promoting moderation and economic modernisation in Pakistan.

India cannot stop the inevitable expansion of Chinese presence in

the subcontinent by diktat. New Delhi will have to convince the Chinese leadership that Beijing's temptation to support whoever is in power and take advantage are complicating the larger international effort to generate political stability in the subcontinent.

Third, India itself must find a way to balance the imperatives of promoting democracy in its neighbourhood with the necessity of engaging the regimes currently in power. Put another way there is a basic tension between the political values that India espouses and the necessity of living with one's neighbours. But the reality is that short-term compromises with the regimes across its borders regimes do undercut the prospects for India's long-term stability.

Fourth, democratic movements in the region have always looked up to India for support that has not always been forthcoming from New Delhi. If the government's recent statement on Balochistan is not to be seen as a flash in the pan, New Delhi must develop a long-term strategy for encouraging democratic forces in the region. This necessarily involves a larger role for the Indian civil society.

Fifth, India needs to separate the economic engagement with the neighbours and the expansion of people-to-people contact from the security problems with the neighbours. Linking them, as India had done in the case of Bangladesh and Pakistan, has had a disastrous effect.

Finally, an effective neighbourhood strategy rests on New Delhi's ability to discipline the full range of agencies, departments, political formations and state governments that have natural interests in the neighbouring countries. The inability to produce policy coherence at home has had debilitating impact over the years on India's ability to deal purposefully with Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan.

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