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Kabul visit of Manmohan Singh

Indian Prime Minister visited Afghanistan in the end of August. This article talks about the important events during his visit and also on the effect of this visit on Indo-Afghan relations.

INDIA and Afghanistan enjoy traditional bonds of friendship, a shared history, many common traditions and enduring cultural ties. India is at present among the top 6 contributors to Afghanistan's reconstruction, a significant effort for a non-traditional donor. India is pursuing development projects virtually in all parts of Afghanistan, covering a wide range of sectors, including hydel power, road construction, agriculture, industry, telecom-



Bonds of friendship, Karzai with Manmohan Singh

munications, information and broadcasting, education and health. The Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh visited Afghanistan in the end of August. He was in Afghanistan from August 28-29. Lots of hopes were attached with this visit of the India Prime Minister that it would further strengthen the already blooming ties between India and Afghanistan.

Pre-departure statement of the PM

In his pre-departure statement Manmohan said that

during this visit he would meet Hamid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. In addition to meeting with the Afghan leadership, he would also call on Baba-e-Millat His Majesty Zahir Shah.

Manmohan said that in the last three years the bilateral relations between the two countries have reached a new level of intensity and cooperation. During his visit, he intended to further strengthen the bilateral interaction as well as reiterate India's support for Afghanistan's economic reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Apart from discussing bilateral relations, he looked forward to exchanging views with the Afghan leadership on regional and international issues

PM gifts project worth \$ 50 million

This was the first visit of an Indian Prime Minister to Afghanistan after a gap of 29 years. In these 29

years, Afghanistan has seen the terror of Taliban which lead to total devastation of this central Asian nation. At the moment it is of utmost significance to provide support to Afghanistan so that it redevelops its infrastructure.

During the present visit to Afghanistan, Manmohan

(Continued on pg 3)

CHECKLIST OF VISITORS

Chief of Chilean Army

Juan Emilio Cheyre

August 17 to 18

Foreign Minister of Maldives

Ahmed Shahdeed

August 11 to 14

President of the World Bank

Paul Wolfowitz

August 17 to 20

Sri Lankan Leader of opposition

Ranil Wickremesinghe

August 16 to 18

Commonwealth Secretary General

Mr. Don McKinnon

August 25

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- Kalam mobilises nation towards energy independence
- India a Mecca for FDI in manufacturing sector

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Progressive leaders

Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai is one of the greatest statesmen who actually deserves the Nobel Peace Prize for the defining role he has played in steering Afghanistan through the most difficult period. President Hamid Karzai must be acknowledged as one of the most astute diplomats for perfectly balancing the equation between Pakistan and India and in doing so, increasing the credibility of Afghanistan. I do believe that Karzai has special diplomatic skills to employ in the domestic field as well, to cajole the rogue elements to accept his leadership and vision for Afghanistan. Even though his vision is far too progressive in the Afghan context at present, Karzai is so perfectly suitable for the transition of Afghanistan that it makes one believe the possibility of a similar leader emerging in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Whether Afghanistan or Pakistan or Bangladesh or other Islamic countries in Asia, all are at a loss to redeem their identity at the cost of their religion. Karzai has indeed proved that being Afghan is more important expresses his identity as an Afghani first and foremost and with a unmatched class and élan. One of the Italian designers distinguished Karzai as the best dressed personality seen in a long long time. The admirable factor is Karzai dresses to his Afghan personality rather than to any gallery. Clothes becometh the man. Karzai does not dress to religion or declare his religion in his dress. As a leader in South Asia he has maintained a dignified distance from all neighbours and yet involved each of the important countries in an encouraging fashion. The Afghan people can surely make progress as a nation and put the turmoil of religion in the past and define their future in relation to their culture and geography and talents of the people. I need to add here that the Afghan people have always identified with the aspirations of the Indian intelligentsia and modernistic changes experienced in Indian society and I am more than confident in President Hamid Karzai in realizing the progressive spirit among the Afghans this time. Afghanistan can and will become an example to the other countries caught in a trap of identifying their cultures in religion. Bangladesh is increasingly getting caught in this nexus of redefining culture in religion. Sustained poverty and resignation to an endless future without being counted in the equity of nations in terms of power or development has in effect resulted in the dramatic shift to religion based politics and terrorism. The recent explosions across Bangladesh will not endear the country to no one, least of all the new Afghanistan. It can only appease similar groups in Pakistan, if anyone at all, in the whole world. The extent of Pakistan's leverage in Bangladesh's business and politics is alarming and reflects once again the domination of the country by Pakistan. This nexus is leading Bangladesh into piracy on a massive scale and will destroy the image of the country sooner than later. Bangladesh needs a progressive leader in the Karzai mould to release it from its entrapment in a disastrous game. India is determining its tryst with destiny right on track with the saving grace of the voters who have fortunately decided to always vote the incumbent out of power, whether leftist, religionist, or progressive modernist.



Anil Chopra, Editor & Publisher

The brief for *imprint* is India's international economic relations, and India's foreign policy impacting economic development, as also the imprint of India globally, arising from the actions of our government. And of Indians in their achievements internationally.



(Continued from pg 1)

Singh offered Afghanistan a gift of projects worth \$50m. This help was in addition to the ongoing \$500 million assistance package to develop infrastructure and social sector in Afghanistan.

Help to fight ultras

Afghanistan is strategically very important for India. In a statement Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran said, "We want Afghanistan to emerge as a democratic, independent, sovereign country, in full mastery of its own destiny. It is in our own interest that India does not once again become a kind of centre of extremism or terrorism. Anything that threatens Afghanistan's stability is a matter of concern for us".

As we all know, the stability of Afghanistan continues to be threatened by the activities of "remnant Taliban" operating from Pakistan. The two leaders condemned global terrorism as threat to democracy and declared that there can be no compromise with those who resort to terrorism. So that the security of Afghanistan is not threatened, India offered help to Afghanistan to deal effectively with terrorism. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said at a joint press conference that we have discussed terrorist threat

worldwide and we have to deal with it together. They reiterated their commitment to work together to ensure that Afghanistan would never again become a safe heaven for terrorism and extremism. Manmohan Singh said, "It is for the government and people of Afghanistan to indicate what type of assistance they want. We are ready to give it".

Both pipelines equally important

Manmohan Singh highlighted the energy requirements of India and disclosed at the joint press conferences with Hamid Karzai that India would prefer to have gas pipeline from both Iran and Turkmenistan passing through Pakistan and Afghanistan.

He added, "We need both the pipelines-Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline and pipeline from Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India as India's energy needs are increasing at a very fast pace.

Regional and international issues discussed

As per the Ministry of External Affairs' press release-During the visit, the two leaders held talks on a broad range of bilateral issues as well as regional and international issues of common concern. They expressed satisfaction at the

progress in bilateral relations since President Hamid Karzai's visit to India during February 2005 and agreed to take this relationship into a new stage of partnership.

Launch of a "Skill Building Initiative"

Dr. Manmohan Singh and President Hamid Karzai signed bilateral cooperation agreements in the areas of Agriculture and Health. A new initiative on 'Small Development Projects' was launched to work with local communities in development programmes. Following on a pilot project undertaken by the Confederation of Indian Industry in pursuance to President Karzai's visit to India earlier this year, the two Governments agreed to launch a "Skill Building Initiative" in Afghanistan in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry and the United Nations.

Solar electrification of Afghan villages

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh announced that India will

adopt 100 villages in Afghanistan to promote integrated rural development by introducing solar electrification and rain water harvesting using technologies that have been developed and successfully demonstrated in India. While announcing a gift of 1000 sewing machine to the Ministry of Women's Affairs, it was agreed that India would assist in establishing a Women's Vocational Training Centre in Kabul.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh welcomed President Hamid Karzai's suggestion to make greater use of Indian institutions for training of Afghans. In order to accelerate the human resource development process, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh announced 500 scholarships for Afghan students for university education and in addition, 500 short-term training fellowships under the ITEC programme for Afghan men and women. A symbol of long-standing cooperation between the two countries in the field

(Continued on pg 6)





Afghans welcome the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on his arrival at the Kabul Airport.



President Hamid Karzai and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh inspect a guard of honour in Kabul after the latter's arrival in Kabul on a two day visit.



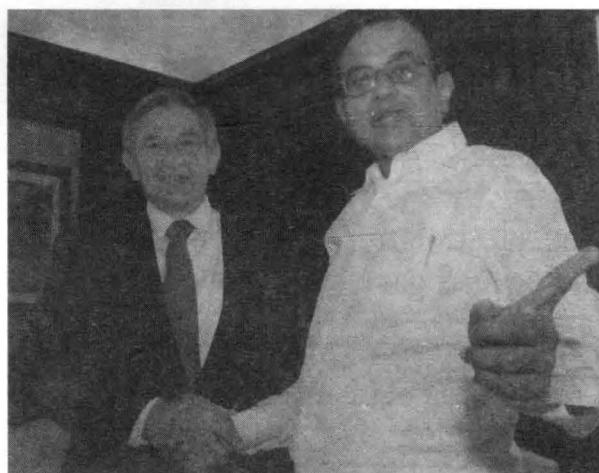
A Guard of Honour for the Chief: Chief of Chilean Army Juan Emilio Cheyre, inspects a guard of Honour. Chilean Chief of Army was on a five day visit to India in the beginning of August 05.



Strengthening bonds with Japan: Chairman of forthcoming Indo-Japanese International Conference, Anant Tharkore(l) with Japanese Consulate general in India, Hyosuke Yasui at a press conference in Mumbai. Indo-Japanese International Conference will be held in the end of November 05.



Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga with external affairs minister K Natwar Singh and defence minister Pranab Mukherjee at a meeting in Colombo.

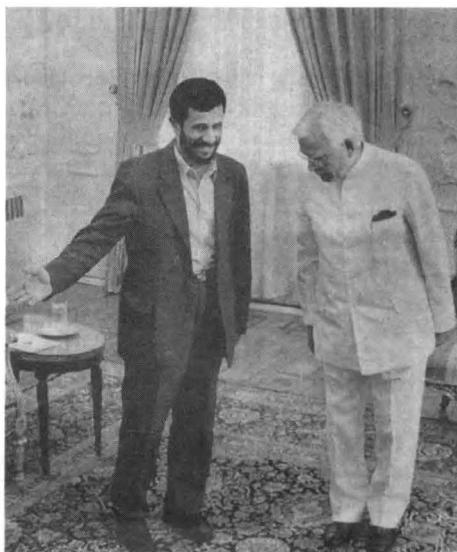


India's financial condition is strong Mr Wolfowitz: Indian Finance Minister P Chidambaram with the President of the World Bank Paul Wolfowitz in New Delhi in the end of August.

DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES



Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad welcomes Indian External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh. Natwar Singh was in Afghanistan in the beginning of September.



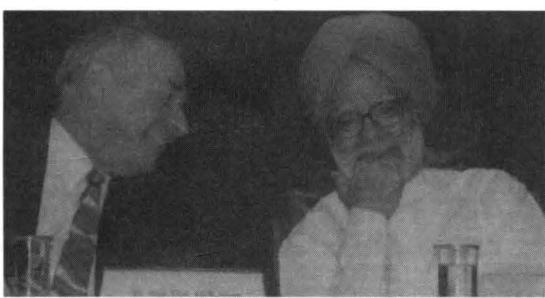
Natwar Singh in Iran: Indian External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh shake hands with his Iranian counterpart Manouchehr Mottaki in Tehran. Natwar Singh visited Tehran in the beginning of September.



Indian Commerce Secretary S N Menon during his talks with his Pakistani counterpart Riyaz Ahmad Khan. The occasion was Foreign Ministerial level meeting. This meeting was held in Islamabad in the beginning of September.

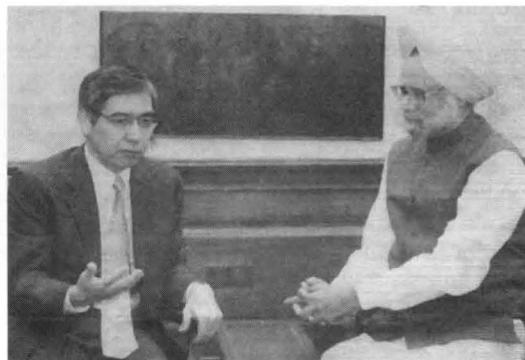


Indian Commerce Secretary, S N Menon(r), with Asif Shah, Acting Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce of Pakistan. The occasion was Indo-Pak secretary level talks held at New Delhi.



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with Commonwealth Secretary, General Don McKinnon at the Commonwealth Asian Colloquium on Development and Democracy in New Delhi.

The Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with President of Asian Development Bank, Haruhiko Kuroda in New Delhi. ADB President was in India in the beginning of September 05.



(Continued from pg 3)

of education is the 102-year old Habibia School which was destroyed in the war and after its rebuilding by India, will be jointly inaugurated by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and President Hamid Karzai.

Laying the foundation stone of the new Parliament



Let us pray for the betterment of our citizens

and human capacity. India welcomes the forthcoming Parliamentary elections which marks a significant milestone in this process

and has already set up dedicated training programmes for Afghanistan officials. In the presence of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and President Hamid Karzai at Darul Aman, Baba-e-Millat His Majesty Mohammad Zabir Shah laid the foundation stone of the new Parliament Building. India has already committed US \$ 25 million for the construction of the Parliament.

President Hamid Karzai shared his vision of restoring Afghanistan's historical rule as a land bridge between Central Asia and Indian sub-continent and the initiatives taken by rebuilding its road network. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh endorsed this vision as an important step for promoting regional cooperation by encouraging, both trade and people-to-people contact among the countries.

Afghanistan seeks closer links with

SAARC

President Hamid Karzai conveyed Afghanistan's interest in seeking closer links with SAARC. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh welcomed this initiative and affirmed India's support for Afghanistan's engagement with SAARC. The two leaders endorsed the need for greater consultation and cooperation in the future project of Turkmenistan gas pipeline to India that would pass through Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The two leaders reaffirmed that Afghanistan and India have a common interest in reinvigorating the past ties and developing a new partnership for the 21st century. The two leaders emphasised the importance of regular high level exchanges between the two countries. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh extended an invitation to President



Manmohan Singh and Hamid Karzai

Hamid Karzai to visit India at a mutually convenient time. President Hamid Karzai conveyed his acceptance to the invitation.

Afghanistan is India's dear friend and this friendship is indeed valuable to India. Indians are respected and loved in Kabul and local people consider Indians as friends. Indians in Afghanistan state that they are totally safe there. The present visit of Manmohan Singh indeed provided a boost to this relationship. India sincerely hopes that soon Kabul will again become famous for its pomegranates and dry fruits instead of the infamous Taliban.

India-GCC free trade agreement likely next year

Pact will greatly enhance trade between the two regions

INDIA and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are likely to sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) next year. The GCC countries include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and the Sultanate of Oman. The agreement will open up avenues in Indian business for the rest of the Arab countries. Negotiations for the pact will begin in early 2006.

"The negotiations, to be initiated under a framework agreement signed by the two parties in August 2004, should be expedited

soon and issues like the rules of origin and differential tariff rates need to be resolved," said Khalifa Bin Ali Al-Harthi, Oman's Ambassador to India and also Dean of the Gulf Ambassadors in India.

According to Al-Harthi the Second India-GCC meeting scheduled for early next year in Muscat will be crucial as here these issues would be discussed in-depth so as to

put in place comprehensive and agreed upon terms preceding the signing of an FTA between the two parties.



The ambassador said that the proposed FTA would significantly enhance trade between India and GCC from the present \$20 Billion (excluding oil trade). India is currently the largest market for GCC exports and signing of a comprehensive economic agreement

with GCC countries individually would further boost the two economies.

Khalid J Al-Yassin, Charge d'Affairs of Kuwait said that authorities in Kuwait were eager to sign more agreements with India in order to strengthen economic ties, including agreement on trade relations, avoidance of double taxation and economic and technical co-operation.

India's foreign policy has a special focus on the GCC countries. This region is an important source of oil and gas and also home to over 3.7 million Indians.

CIA seeks out Indian intelligence

Professor Sumit Ganguly, will provide his expertise on South Asia, especially India to the CIA'S National Intelligence Council (NIC)

PROFESSOR Sumit Ganguly, holding the Rabindranath Tagore chair in history at the University of Indiana, Bloomington, will provide his expertise on South Asia, especially India to the CIA'S National Intelligence Council (NIC). This is part of the Global Expertise Reserve Program. Ganguly will help the NIC to shape US policy on South Asia and in interpreting trends and events in the region.

The NIC provides strategic direction to US poli-

cies, combining intelligence with academic expertise and projecting assessments that could throw light on future events.

According to the NIC website, experts like Ganguly will work with the intelligence community in warning policymakers or potential humanitarian, diplomatic, economic or military crises. These experts are selected from the academic or corporate world and think tanks.

In July, India and the US signed a deal giving India

access to US civilian nuclear technology. This deal is part of a larger focus on India by US policymakers. Ganguly's appointment follows this event. In the spate of criticism that followed the signing of this deal, Ganguly has been a positive voice.

Earlier this year the NIC published a study called 'Mapping the Global Future' wherein it predicted that India and China could achieve superpower status. According to the study China, India and perhaps

Brazil and Indonesia could usher in a new set of international alignments, potentially marking a definitive break with some of the post-World War II institutions and practices. It also states that the rise of India will present strategic complications for the region. Like China, India will be an economic magnet for the region and its rise will have an impact not only in Asia but also to the north-Central Asia, Iran and other countries of the Middle East.

India could emerge as third largest economy by 2020

Reforms must be pursued more aggressively

INDIA could emerge as the third largest economy after the US and China by 2020, according to Norbert Walter, chief economist at Deutsche Bank. Walter says that India can attain a higher GDP growth of 7-8% if reforms are pursued more aggressively.

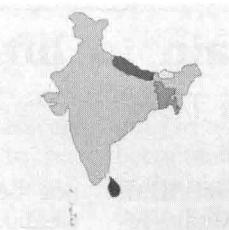
Walter's projections are based on India's favourable demographics, increasing investment in education and infrastructure and further integration with the world economy.

"The continuation of the reform process will allow India to stay on a high growth path of around 6% annually over the next 10-15 years. If reforms were pursued more aggressively,

the real GDP growth could reach 7-8%," said Walter in a seminar at the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce (IGCC).

"India's GDP per capita will double roughly \$2,500 at purchasing power parity to almost \$5,000 in 2020," he said. With higher growth, India will see emergence of a larger and richer consumer market. India will also see a change in consumption pattern with expenditure on healthcare, transport and communications going up substantially.

"Household savings will increase, given the large amount of people entering the working class phase." He added that there will be



rising demand for diversified financial instruments to invest those savings.

He identified IT, textiles, auto-ancillary and pharma industries as the fastest growing sectors given India's comparative advantages and current sectoral trends. "The banking sector has vast potential which is likely to be unleashed by the new domestic investment landscape, gradual privatisation and opening up to foreign banks," said Walter.

He cited that traces of India's "inward-looking development strategy" still prevails, despite its significant economic advances.

India's trade volumes as share of GDP was still meagre when compared to other Asian countries while its import tariffs still remain comparably high.

70,116 Indians are legal permanent residents of the US

INDIANS form the second largest immigrant group to have become legal permanent residents (LPRs) of the US in 2004, Mexicans being the largest.

"Mexico led all countries with 175,364 'aliens' who became LPRs in the fiscal year 2004 (ending September 30, 2004). India followed with 70,116 LPRs and the Philippines came in third with 57,827," the congressional research service said in its latest report, based on official figures.

"These three countries are almost one-third of all LPRs in fiscal 2004," the report pointed out.

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Indo-US N-Treaty at a crucial stage

Largest Democracy & Oldest Democracy to share nuclear technology

PRIME MINISTER Manmohan Singh and President Bush announced an agreement whereby the US will share civilian nuclear technology with India, during an official visit last month. The US law currently bans civilian nuclear cooperation with countries that have not submitted to full nuclear inspections. The US Congress has to approve an exception to or change this before shipping the technology to India.

Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice has already sought support from Congressional leaders for this and the administration will work towards making this deal happen after lawmakers return from their summer break on September 6.

This deal, however, throws speculation on the global exchange of nuclear supplies.

"At the end of the day, historians are going to judge this agreement primarily by whether or not

it does provide a convenient pretext for other non-nuclear weapon states to become nuclear weapon states," said Robert Hathaway, director of the Woodrow Wilson Centre's Asia Programme.

Senator John Cornyn supports the deal. "It just makes enormous sense that the world's largest democracy and the world's oldest democracy get together and work together in pursuit of our common values," said the Texas Republican. Cornyn is also Chairman of the bipartisan India Caucus.

Criticism is mounting

September will be a critical period for the Indo-US nuclear pact. The US will be sending one of its key diplomats, Undersecretary Nicholas Burns, to India. This will be followed by a meeting of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), which diplomatic sources say, will have only one issue to discuss, that is the

Indo-US N-treaty.

As soon as the Bush administration reconvenes, it will make a proposal in the US Congress requesting the legislative body to amend US laws to accommodate India. The Congress' response to this proposal is critical, as this is just what other countries are waiting for.

Opposition to the nuclear pact is rising from the Democratic party non-proliferation lobby which includes the likes of former assistant secretary for non-proliferation to even heavyweights in the US Senate like majority leader Bill Frist and Chairman of the senate foreign relations committee, Richard Lugar.

India under scrutiny

The opposition's sentiment is that India does not deserve to be the exception and that dismantling an entire global regime for India could put North Korea and Iran on the same path. It is also felt



Manmohan Singh with Bush

that India has not offered anything substantial in return. This deal coincides with the North Korea talks and Iran crisis.

India is hoping that the matter focuses on the energy issue, India's needs and that a growing prosperous India is a good balance for the region. But convincing the different stakeholders in the US is a difficult task.

The Indian American community could play an important role as they could mobilize support for this deal depending on their clout with their respective legislator.

The Indian government will announce the appointment of a set of lobbyists to work on this issue.

Nuke talks: Now it is the turn of Britain to lift sanctions

Britain has lifted the Nuclear sanction which were levied on India

EARLIER it was US and now Britain has lifted the nuclear sanction. These sanctions were forced on India earlier in the past. Lifting of sanction clearly indicates the strength of US-UK transatlantic relations. It also begins a new phase in Indo-British friendship.

Tony Blair's government disclosed in the British parliament, the important

changes in its laws pertaining to the export of dual use technology to India.

According to the relaxed rules, for India and Pakistan, the application for items under the dual use list of the Nuclear Suppliers group (NSG) shall be dealt on case to case basis. The applications shall be scrutinised to see whether their ends use is in IAEA-

safeguarded civilian nuclear facility. Media reports say that the applications for other licensable items will also be opened on a case to case basis. This will also include items which are under WMD end use control.

In simple words, the main criterion for taking into consideration these sanctions will be a clear certification that they will

not be used in creating weapons of mass destruction but will be used in safe guarded nuclear fuel cycles.

India and UK has been negotiating on lifting of these sanctions since quite some time. In the recent deal with US, India clearly committed itself to some sanctions. Probably, this has lead to lifting of sanctions by UK.

India's First Space Observatory, Astrosat - Indian to the core

INDIA'S first space observatory for multiwavelength scientific explorations of the invisible universe - Astrosat, launch 2008 - will carry a payload of five major instruments being designed and built hands-on in labs nationwide with some foreign collaborations.

At the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, veteran professors are train-



ing engineers to make three

out of five of the instruments. "If we outsourced, costs would shoot up by 20 or 30 times," says the project's principal investigator, PC Agrawal.

Currently, under development are 1,400 thin wires, each one-third the diameter of a human hair. The wires are part of a large area X-ray detector to measure energy and timing of X-ray emissions. "Such a detector would cost 20-30 million dollars abroad," says Agrawal. "We are developing this instrument within 10 crore."

Another professor, KP Singh and his team are developing mirrors and a camera that will reflect X-rays at angles less than a degree and create image

of their sources. Astrosat weighs just around 1.6 tonne and the mirrors will be 100 times lighter and almost 1,000 times cheaper than those used in NASA's Chandra X-Ray Observatory. The digital camera's one-inch chip involves a collaboration with UK's Leicester University but the camera will be Indian.

"It's a competitive, niche mission and slow, laborious work," says Singh. "Tips from our Japanese friends help. We're not putting in billions but it's a start close to frontier research."

Astrosat project director at ISRO's satellite centre in Bangalore, Professor V Koteswara Rao's team at TIFR is re-engineering

medical X-ray technologies developed abroad to suit space research.

Astrosat was approved only last year, although planning has continued since the nineties. "The real challenge is merging engineering and space aspects. A conscious decision was taken to involve national institutes of repute where expertise is available," says V Koteswara Rao.

"We are perceived as a developing nation that can't take up complicated, challenging experiments," says Agrawal. "But now the astronomy community has an opportunity for front ranking research." This will indeed take India's space research to the next level.

IGNOU to connect India and Africa

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) would be a part of the content providing network of the Pan African network

INDIAN President A P J Abdul Kalam visited Johannesburg in the month of September last year. During this visit he addressed the Pan-African Parliament and expressed India's willingness to set up a Pan-African network of tele-education and tele-medicine.

Now the media reports pronounce that the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) would be a part of the content providing network of the Pan African network. This network comprise of 53 countries of the African Union. These countries shall be provided with tele-education and tele-medicine fa-

cilities.

Professor S C Garg, The Pro Vice-Chancellor of IGNOU said in a media release, "IGNOU has been chosen to provide the course content because it is one of the biggest systems in the world using information and communication technology to impart education".

Now the natural question which arises in our minds is as how this system is going to work? In this system, there will be an under sea optic fibre cable. This cable will run from either Cochin or Mumbai

to Djibouti which is on the east coast of Africa. At Djibouti, programmes will be up linked through a satellite to the receiving centres in all 53 countries.

INTELSAT 904 spans the entire African Continent and most probably this satellite will be used to beam the content.

Sources say, the Ministry of External Affairs would provide an amount of US \$50 million for the project. This fund will come from the "Aid to Africa" budget of the Ministry of External Affairs.

This is indeed an impor-

tant initiative as not only would it help knowledge dissemination but would also help in the diagnosis of diseases. This would be possible through the telemedicine system which would enable doctors in Africa to communicate with doctors in India.

In India and Africa, a large population needs to be imparted education and equally large populace needs the timely diagnosis so that there is no delay in the treatment of disease. This tele-education project is indeed an important step in the road to knowledge and good health in the African nations.



Are we loosing the warmth of Indo-Israel relations?

India must pay attention to its relationship with Tel Aviv

INDIA and Israel share good relations. For any relationship it is important to pay attention to the other side, otherwise the relationship dies. Indian Beaurocrats should not ignore this important reality, especially in the case of Indo-Israel bonds.

Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visited India around two years ago. This visit was given a lot of importance by the Indian political circles as well as the Indian media. However, media reports mention that since then India has allowed an unnecessary cool-

ing of the Indo-Israel ties. If we are to believe these reports then it is definitely a matter of concern.

The reason is Pakistan's extra willingness to expand ties with Israel. Our neighbour is trying all diplomatic means to improve relations with Israel. Last January, at the Davos Business Summit, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shakur Aziz met the Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

Pakistan has observed the military and high technology transfer from Israel to India. It was always in-

terested in this technology, now the strong relations between Pakistan and Israel would definitely help Pakistan receive that technology.

One can see that Pakistan is going all out for cultivating bond with Israel, on the contrary India has so far been unwilling to reciprocate the Israeli Prime Minister and Presidents visit to India. The reason why India sites for the deliberate downplaying of relations is the India's need to balance its ties between



Pakistan's Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri with his Israeli counterpart David Shalom

Israel and Arabs.

Present Indian government and its diplomats must understand the meaning of our relationship with Israel and should perform the balancing act with some intelligence.

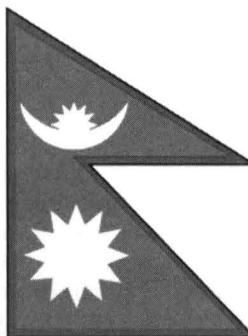
Indian outlaws in Nepalese militia

INDIA and Nepal are moving towards a stand-off along the Valmikinagar (India) – Triveni (Nepal) area on the Champaran border. This is because the Royal Nepal Army (RNA), with apparent backing of the monarchy, has formed a militia of Indian fugitives to combat the Red insurgents.

Nepal has formed the "Pratikar Samiti" – an anti-insurgency militia comprising dozens of dreaded Indian fugitives from

Champaran.

There has been talk that dozens of absconding outlaws from India being taken to a military base near Kathmandu, where they have been allegedly trained in jungle and guerrilla warfare. Indian intelligence has not de-



nied these stories.

"The Pratikar Samiti will snowball into a major worry for us," said SK Bharadwaj, Champaran range DIG.

Due to this, smuggling rackets are continuing without impunity from Nepalese territory, operated by the Champaran outlaws. They

are also encroaching upon Indian territory with the backing of their patrons across the border. "Susta has been turned into a safe haven for Indian fugitives," says SK Jha, DIG of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).

"Efforts are underway to demarcate the border, which has become nebulous in the Susta region due to the shifting courses of the Gandak," said West Champaran district magistrate, Rahul Singh.

India-Russia defence agreement

INDIA and Russia have signed an agreement by which India would buy 250 AL-55 engines for the intermediate jet trainers (IJT) developed by Hindustan Aeronautical Limited (HAL) with the option of another 1,000 engines to be produced

under license in India.

The multi-million dollar deal was signed by Russian defence export agency Rosoboron export and HAL in the presence of Russian President Vladimir Putin at the international aerospace show 'Maks'. HAL chair-

man Ashok K Baweja and his team were in Moscow to participate in the airshow where for the first time HAL had its own stall.

The AL-55 engine is being developed by Ufa-based Russian Engine Factory, which has been

closely linked with NPO Satun aircraft engine designing bureau.

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India & China to start afresh in bilateral trade

"INDIA and China are set to start afresh in bilateral trade. There are many areas where the two countries can work together," says Ajay Sahai, director general of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO).

The FIEO aims to boost trade and industry between the two nations. The body represents one lakh Indian exporters and importers. An eleven member FIEO delegation is currently visiting China. This visit comes after a gap of seven

years.

"We are looking at new strategies. One possibility is to import certain raw materials and components from China, and use them to reduce the cost of our manufacturing," said Sahai.

The visit comes at an appropriate time as Chinese steel makers have already begun to reduce their dependence on imported iron ore. It accounts for over 50% of India's exports to China.

The latest statistics for January and February 2005

released by China customs suggest some dramatic changes in the export basket. Exports of items like machinery, inorganic chemicals, fats and oils, fish and salts and sulphur have risen by more than 100% as compared to the Jan-Feb period last year.

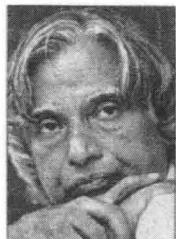
"China offers a good market for organic and inorganic chemicals, auto components, pharmaceuticals, plastics and granite," Sahai said. Bilateral trade-exports and imports included between the two

countries is expected to touch \$18 billion this year, an 80% rise over the \$13.6 billion achieved last year. Sahai says that the past few years have seen impressive growth and this is a pointer to the huge potential that awaits in the near future.

The FIEO is working on ways in which to boost export of services of professionals like CAs, lawyers, management consultants and training institutions like management and engineering institutions.

Kalam mobilises nation towards energy independence

IN the wake of soaring world crude prices, in his Independence Day message to the nation, President APJ Abdul Kalam said that the country needed to evolve a "comprehensive renewable energy policy for energy independence within a year" which should address all issues relating to generation of energy through wind, solar, geothermal, bio-mass and



APJ Abdul Kalam

realising self-reliance in nuclear power generation and India should work to-

wards establishing them

Kalam said that thorium-based reactors are one of the immediate requirements for realising self-reliance in nuclear power generation and India should work to-

wards establishing them. He said that the strategic goals for energy independence by 2030 would call for a shift in the structure of energy sources.

"Energy independence has to be our nation's first and highest priority. We must be determined to achieve this within the next 25 years. For true energy independence, a major shift in the structure of energy

sources from fossil to renewable energy sources is mandated," said Kalam. According to him India needs to critically look at the requirement for energy independence in different ways in two major sectors-electric power generation and transportation.

This is in keeping with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's initiative on energy cooperation with the US.

Blackwill's firm to lobby for India in US

India has decided to engage Barbour Griffith & Rogers International, as a lobbyist. The president of this firm is former Ambassador to India, Robert Blackwill.

IN the mid of September, the Indo-US nuclear deal is expected to be tabled in the US parliament. Realizing the importance of the situation, India has decided to engage Barbour Griffith & Rogers International, as a lobbyist to give a push to its case. The president of Barbour Griffith & Rogers International is former Ambassador to India, Robert

blackwill. As per media reports, this decision was taken in consultation with the Indian Ambassador to US, Ronnen Sen.

Blackwill joined this firm in November 2004. He had finished his term in India in the year 2003. Blackwill was a key member of the Bush Administration's team on foreign policy. He was Deputy Assistant to Presi-

dent George W Bush, Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Planning as well as Presidential Advisor to Iraq during the first term of the Bush Administration.

This decision to hire Blackwill's firm has been taken keeping in view that a section of the Democrats may question the nuclear deal. They would argue that the nuclear

structure, set up by the P-5 was being taken apart by the Bush administration.

India cannot hire Blackwill as an individual because of the predetermined "cooling off" period for the US officials after they leave the office.



Robert Blackwill

Lense eye watch: Is military rule good for a country?

MEDIA reports say that India's two immediate neighbours have always concentrated on enriching themselves when their military or monarchy were in power.

This report has been taken out by a Bombay based strategic foresight group which states that Pakistan's economic life has always improved when its military leaders secured external aid or exported manpower. However, the report, under the heading 'His Majesty His Military', said that this economic health deteriorated when the external support system weakened.

However, any boon the establishment in these two nations receives, does not

translate into profits for the general public. According to a report from an international news paper. "So long as these two institutions

dominate the two countries, the rest of the population, except the small charmed circles around the monarchy and military can be certain of gradual impoverishment. Economic democracy does not matter."

The report further mentions that while Pakistan



and Nepal were under the spell of their military and monarchy, India and Bangladesh had bureaucratic systems that could sound the death-knell for industrial growth in the two countries.

According to the report, "India and Bangladesh it appears do not need the monarchy or military to distort the economy. They have bureaucrats who can inspect, arrest, squeeze entrepreneurs and kill their entrepreneurial spirit. India's inspection Raj will deliver an opportunity loss of US

\$2,000 billion in missed industrial growth over the next two decades," the report added.

Further the SFG report states that at the current state of human development, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh were almost 30 years behind their East Asian neighbours, and added that the informal trade in the subcontinent was in the hands of smugglers.

According to the report, from the US \$2 billion informal trade between India and Pakistan, almost half was traded through third countries like Dubai, nations in Central Asia and Afghanistan. The rest was through informal cross-border trade.

Pak dodgy to permanently open Wagah route

RESIDENTS on both sides of the border were extremely happy with the news that Pakistan will permanently reopen the Wagah route. Soon they realized that the joy was short lived as some contradictory news started pouring in. If the latest reports in the media are to be believed then it is most unlikely that Pakistan will immediately accept India's request to permanently open the Wagah route.

This issue of opening of Wagah border was discussed during the two day deliberations for economic and commercial cooperation under the frame work of a composite dialogue between India and Pakistan in the beginning of August.

According to the information given to the media by Pakistani officials, the Paki-

stani side has already informed India that it had constituted a study group which will examine the impact of opening up of the land route on a permanent basis. Also the final decision to open the route will be taken only after the study group brings out its report.

It was in 1994 that India had notified Pakistan regarding opening of the Wagah Attari land customs station on a permanent basis, for movement of goods by rail and road.

Both sides realize that commerce would definitely lead to improvement of relations between the two countries. According to the Indian side, liberalising visa restrictions, simplifying the rules on shipping and exploring cooperation in civil aviation and petroleum will be mutually beneficial. In-



dia has also informed Pakistan that exchange of technology and skills and telecommunications networking between the two nations will help in enhancing the quality of goods and closer interaction.

As per media reports, the Pakistani side has allowed the import of vegetables

and live animals via Wagah to increase bilateral trade. Pakistan has also included medicines and vaccines for the treatment of AIDS and cancer in the list of items it can import from India. The latest addition to this list is the import of raw and refined sugar from India.

India a Mecca for FDI in manufacturing sector

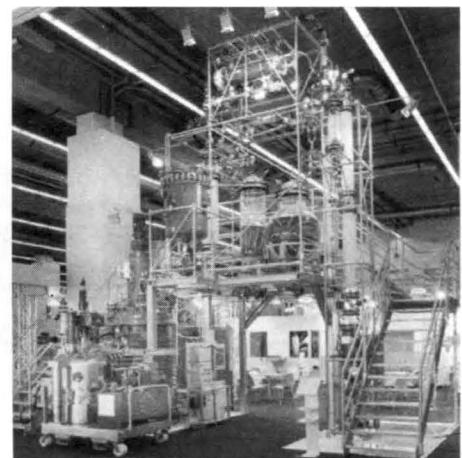
THERE is good news from the financial sector; India has displaced US to become the second-most attractive destination for the foreign direct investment (FDI) among manufacturing investors. This is as per the A T Kearney's latest FDI Confidence Index rankings. The rankings are based on an annual survey of chief executive officers, chief financial officers and other top executives of Global 1000 companies, conducted by the Global Business Policy Council of A T Kearney.

As per the reports in the media, telecom and utility investors have upgraded India from the fifth place to second. At the same time, the US was displaced from the top-most position down to the fourth place, just after Hong Kong.

However one cannot ignore the performance of China which has upgraded its position. As per media reports, China has swapped places with the US, up from fourth to the first. Overall, India has moved up three notches from the sixth place last year to the

third as the most attractive FDI destination. The perception gap between the US and India is however, fast closing.

According to the Pricewaterhouse Coopers, "Recent government initiatives have raised India's short-term attractiveness as an investment destination". In the last term there was a 24% increase in the FDI inflow to India. However if a comparison is done between India and China then we realize that



it is relatively low at \$ 4.3 billion against China's \$ 53.5 billion.

Do we really need a Indo-Chinese FTA?

AT present India and China are passing through the cordial phase of their relationship. Naturally this is the time when the two countries would expect the trade to flourish.

In the first quarter of this financial year, the bilateral trade between the two countries has shown a 63% increase. However a Free

Trade Agreement between the two countries appears to be a distant reality. There are various reasons for this, firstly India is rightfully sceptical that China's mighty manufacturing Machinery would flood India with cheap goods. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, China is not yet a market economy although

it is gradually turning itself into a market economy.

China on the other hand seems to be too eager to have a FTA with India. Recently, the Ambassador of People's Republic of China, Sun Yuxi said that an FTA was very much on cards. Sun Xui said, "Given the size of India and China's economies and population,

such FTA would be the largest of its kind in the world. A series of consultations at various levels are being held between the two countries to give a formal shape to this agreement".

At present, Indian government must trudge vigilantly and analyse all the pros and cons before signing an FTA with China.

India-Pak: Third round of talks in January 2006

Agreement on the reworking of the air pact and signing of the energy treaty on anvil

AT present India and Pakistan seems to disagree on crucial issues such as Siachin, Wular Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project and Sir Creek but the two countries will go ahead with the third round of composite dialogue process which is scheduled in January next year.

Meanwhile on the front of the cooperation regarding the gas pipeline there some positive news. The



two countries have agreed to sign the Energy Charter

Treaty (ECT). The ECT is a global arrangement for security to energy related trade and investments.

Also, as per media reports, the two countries have decided to rework their civil aviation and shipping agreements. The technical groups from both sides of the border would meet in the month of September to discuss the outlines of the fresh agreement.

Regarding cooperation in

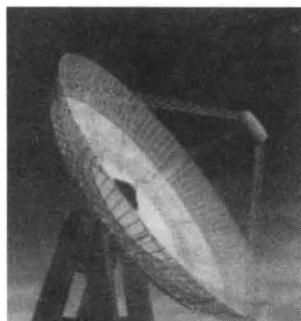
the financial sector and capital markets, India and Pakistan have agreed for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Indian regulator SEBI and the Pakistan Stock Market watchdog, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan.

It is indeed a proper approach to continue dialogue on other issues even if there is disagreement on a particular matter.

ISRO: The latest entry to the satellite rescue club

INDIAN Space Research Organization (ISRO) as we all know is India's premier space research organization. ISRO has been involved in a number of space research projects. The latest news is that ISRO is now going to join the satellite rescue club.

India will launch its first recoverable satellite in early 2006. At present scientists at ISRO are working on this mega project. This important experiment known as Space Capsule recovery Experiment (SRE) envisages the development of a 600-kg recoverable satellite as a



co-passenger of Cartosat-2 on board PSLV and with it demonstrate the technology of successful re-entry.

This experiment is extremely challenging as the development of a recoverable satellite poses a great

challenge because the satellite has to be de-orbited and protected from intense heat generated (around 1,500 degrees centigrade) when it re-enters the earth's atmosphere.

Now what is this satellite rescue? Satellite rescue means capability of recovering an orbiting space capsule. Till now only the United States, Russia, the European Union and China possess this technology which allows them to bring a satellite back to earth.

for its flight.

After its launch by PSLV, SRE will remain in orbit for a few days during which it will be used to perform experiments in micro-gravity environment. After this the capsule will be de-orbited. As it makes its entry into the earth's atmosphere at a velocity of 7.5 km/sec, a parachute system will reduce the touch down velocity.

According to the reports, the SRE will splash-

down in the Bay of Bengal, around 140 km off Sriharikota coast. A floatation system will keep the SRE afloat to enable its recovery.

The SRE will test some systems which are significant for carrying a space journey in safety. The SRE is intended to test reusable thermal protection system, navigation, guidance and control, hypersonic aerothermodynamics, management of communication blackout, deceleration and floatation system and recovery operations. As per reports, ISRO has also selected experiments in quasicrystal growth and biomimetic material synthesis on SRE.

Reports state that SRE has four major hardware elements: aero-thermo structure, spacecraft platform, deceleration and floatation system and payloads for conducting experiments in micro-gravity.

World Bank provides an assistance of \$2.89 billion

WORLD Bank has always been willing to provide assistance to developing countries including India. In the financial year 2004-05 India received an assistance of \$2.89 billion from the World Bank. This was double the amount it had received as assistance in the previous year.

Media reports say that the increase in World Bank support to India is an indicator of the rapid growth in India's economy as most part of this assistance would go to infrastructure development.

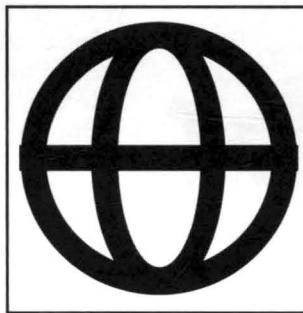
As per the reports, India was also the largest recipient of International Development Association (IDA) assistance, with credits totaling \$600 million.

Some reports in the media were of the opinion that although World Bank's support to India was quite significant, it represented a small por-

tion of countries financing requirement. World Bank also provides non-lending support to India in the form of reports and analysis covering the financial sector of the country.

We the people of India must understand it clearly that we must try to generate funds internally, instead of develop-

ing this tendency of being dependent on the World Bank's funds for running our schemes. Otherwise there won't be a sustainable development in India. Besides this, our policy makers should not forget that more we borrow money, more are the chances of lending agencies interference in the policies of our country.



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Shoot them down: Says our latest hijack policy

According to India's latest anti-hijack policy, foreign planes will not be allowed to land in India.

INDIA has adopted a tough policy regarding the policy towards dealing with a hijacked plane. According to this policy, a hijacked plane will be shot down.

According to India's latest policy which is being termed as an anti-hijack policy, any foreign-registered aircraft hijacked in the Indian skies will not be allowed to land in the country.

The policy further states that India will make all efforts to see that the plane makes a safe and quick exit from the Indian air space. Let us now have a look at the mechanism of this anti-hijack policy. This policy clearly lays a mechanism for the coordination of action between various agencies responsible for implementing this policy.

The policy clearly states that if any suspicious ac-



tivity is noticed or an aircraft shows a hijack alert, the Air Traffic Control, (ATC) Watch Supervisory Officer, (WSO) will inform the Joint Control and Analysis Centre (JCAC) which is in turn manned by Indian Air Force officials.

In the next step the JCAC will analyse the situation with the inputs from the ATC. Based on this analysis, the IAF's operational wing will be alerted. This wing is responsible for giving orders to the fighter aircraft.

If an aircraft is declared rogue after it ignores the ATC and the air defence

warnings, the WSO will be asked to activate the Central Committee headed by the Director General of Civil Aviation. This will further lead to Committee of Secretaries on Aircraft Hijack (COSAH) to act as a crisis management group.

If this aircraft aligns itself towards any strategic target like Parliament House, then it will be declared as a threat to the country and the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) can take a decision to shoot it down.

This policy has given the anti-terror stand of India a brave, new dimension. Media firmly believes that the Manmohan Singh Government has unveiled a tough anti-hijack policy under which any hijacked plane, being used as a missile to target vital installations as in the 9/11 terror attack, will be shot

down. Under the policy, already cleared by the CCS, no negotiations whatsoever with the hijackers on their demands will be entertained. The significant part of this policy is that it strictly rules out any negotiations with hijackers on meeting any of their demands. The hijackers would be spoken to only for the release of the passengers, official sources said. If the hijacking took place on the Indian soil, the aircraft would be immobilized and would not be allowed to take off. This will definitely prevent Kandahar-type hijacking.

This latest anti-hijack policy is being really appreciated in India. This is indeed a major step in curbing the terrorist activities in the future as any terrorist organization will think twice before hijacking a plane in India.

India-Venezuela to cooperate in the oil sector

AS per media reports, the first high level two day meeting of the joint commission between India and Venezuela held in Caracas was held in the month of September.

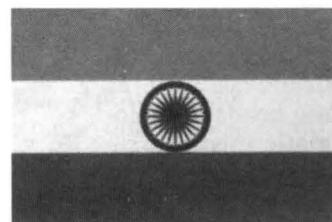
The meeting emphasised India's interest in Venezuelan oil and gas industry particularly through agreements such as the one between ONGC Videsh Ltd and PdVSA of Venezuela to exploit the oilfield of San Cristobal.

The Venezuelan side also acknowledged India's potential in infrastructure through agreements such as the one between Ircon

and the Venezuelan railway authority.

The Indian delegation was led by minister of state for external affairs Rao Inderjit Singh, consisted of officials from various ministries as well as senior executives of private and public sector undertakings.

The Venezuelan delegation was led by foreign minister Ali Rodriguez Araque of the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The joint commission was set up under an agreement signed during the state visit of President Hugo Chavez Frias to



India in March.

Reports say, the meeting also covered a wide range of cooperation in various sectors including energy, poverty alleviation, railways, trade, science and technology and economic cooperation.

The two ministers signed an agreement on exemption of visa requirement in respect of diplomatic and

official pass ports of the two countries.

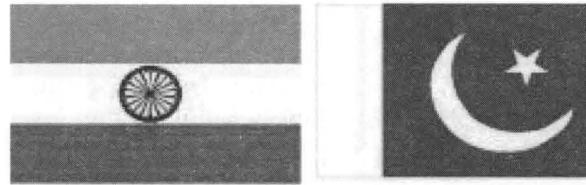
Mr Rao was scheduled to visit Puerto Ordaz, where he was to meet minister of basic industry and mining, Victor Alvarez of the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and visit a technology demonstration centre set up by India in Venezuela.

Dialogue process to continue between India and Pakistan

India and Pakistan recently decided to continue the composite dialogue process

AS per media reports, building on the new momentum in bilateral ties, India and Pakistan recently decided to continue the composite dialogue process and sign an agreement on pre-notification of ballistic missile tests at the foreign minister-level meeting held in Islamabad.

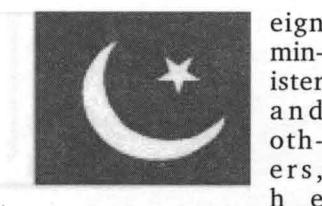
"Both sides agree on the integrity of the composite dialogue. The third round of the composite dialogue will take place and hopefully, it will start by the end of this year," Pakistan foreign secretary, Riaz Mohammad Khan said at a press conference, after having talks with his visiting Indian counterpart



Shyam Saran.

As per media reports, the accord on pre-notification of ballistic missile tests will be signed when external affairs minister K Natwar Singh meets his Pakistani counterpart Khurshid M Kasuri here from October 3-5 this year.

Mr Khan said when the Hurriyat leaders had visited Pakistan, "We welcomed them." They had discussions with the President, Prime minister, for-



called. So Hurriyat leadership, "whom we recognise as the representatives of kashmiri people should be associated with the peace process.

Here, there are three parties—Pakistan, India and the Kashmiri people. So, this is a positive development that they (Hurriyat) will also be meeting the Indian leadership," Mr Khan said.

On being asked about

the mandate of the joint commission, he said it would be revived in pursuance to the decision taken by Gen. Musharraf and Dr Singh when they met in New Delhi in April this year. The last meeting of the commission was held in 1989. At that time, it had four sub-commissions.

"We will have to see what kind of format it should have," Mr Khan said, adding dates for its first meeting to be held at the foreign ministers' level were being worked out. The meeting will discuss what should be the mandate of the commission, its structure and objectives.

Saarc: Information ministers meet in Nepal

IN the end of August, Kathmandu hosted the meeting of South Asian Association for regional cooperation (Saarc) Information Ministers. As per media reports King Gyanendra of Nepal inaugurated this two-day meeting of the Information ministers of the Saarc countries.

This important meeting was attended by the heads

of delegations from Nepal, India, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Maldives. Also present in the meeting were Saarc officials as well as the heads of diplomatic missions.

Media reports that after inauguration, the meeting began discussions on how to implement the 18-point

action plan drawn up at the first meeting in Dhaka in 1998 to develop information technology and ways to harness it for economic development of the region.

The meeting discussed trans-national satellite broadcasting, media exchanges and greater flow



of information in the region through sharing of technological developments.

Also there were discussion of the weekly Saarc news on government radio and broadcasting a television news programme once a month in Saarc Countries. Union Minister Jaipal Reddy lead the Indian delegation at this fifth meeting of the Information Ministers of Saarc.

India offers \$5 million for New Orleans

AS per media reports, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has announced a \$5 million assistance to the American Red Cross for rebuilding flood-ravaged New Orleans. This is the first time that India has

offered assistance for relief and reconstruction of a US city.

Prime Minister's chief media advisor Sanjaya Baru told media persons shortly after a function in Kerala that the Prime Minister has

announced financial backing of \$5 million for New Orleans in Los Angeles in its days of Katrina havoc.

Sources say, the money will be routed through the American Red Cross.

In the beginning of this

year, India had contributed \$25 million towards tsunami relief to countries in the Indian Ocean belt. At that time India had firmly declined the international assistance for its own relief operations.

ITER project: Manmohan Singh to do some networking in Paris

Manmohan to discuss ITER during his Paris visit

AS per media reports Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visits Paris early next month on a bilateral visit, one of the key issues on his agenda will be to lobby with France to include India in the ambitious project to build a nuclear fusion reactor.

Reports say, Dr Singh's efforts, part of the quest to make India energy reliant, will be to press for membership of the six-nation consortium which is going ahead with the International thermo-nuclear experimental reactor (ITER) project. This project will be built in Cadarache in France.

Prime Minister will have a one day stopover in Paris before moving to New York for the UN general assembly. In France there will also be discussions on light water reactors (LWRs) and small-sized (220 MWe) or medium-sized (540 MWe) pressurised heavy water reactors (PH WRs).

Partnering the ITER project are the European Atomic Energy Community, China, Japan, South Korea, Russian Federation and US. India has already written to all the six partners seeking participation in the 10 billion euro project.

Manmohan Singh had

met President George Bush earlier this year, during this meeting India had held talks with the US on the subject of ITER. Now with positive feedback from the US, New Delhi perceives that it will be able to find support from France too on the issue.

The French have been among India's closest associates and was the only western nation not to criticize Delhi after the May 1998 nuclear tests, besides helping block many sanctions on India that followed the tests.

Reports say, the Indian Prime Minister would be

holding substantive talks on a number of issues with the French leadership, including his counterpart Dominique de Villepin as well as President Jacques Chirac.

India wants to strengthen its ties with France. Sources indicate that there has been some discomfort within the French over growing proximity of India towards US. India attaches great importance to its ties with France and during Manmohan Singh's visit there he would definitely try to bring some warmth to Indo-French relations.

The characteristic Pakistani skepticism: Now vexed about blooming Indo-Afghan ties

Indian media says Pakistan has politico-strategic concerns about the growing links between New Delhi and Kabul

RELATIONS with Afghanistan are extremely important for India. From the South Asian perspective, Afghanistan serves as a kind of gateway to Central Asia, which is likely to assume greater geopolitical significance in the coming years because its strategic location, gas deposits and the role that China, Russia and the US are looking to carve out for themselves in the area. Islamabad calculates that the warm relations between New Delhi and Kabul will place India in a strong position to build close ties with the Central Asia since ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks account for over 30% of Afghan population.

As per the reports in the

media, the visit of Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh to Afghanistan on August 28 and 29 was closely monitored in Pakistan which has politico-strategic concerns about the growing links between New Delhi and Kabul. After all, although the implementation of confidence-building measures has under-scored the current thaw in India-Pakistan relations, both sides remain deeply divided on the Kashmir issue.

At present the Musharraf administration is anxious about India's efforts to forge friendly ties with Pakistan's neighbours—Afghanistan, China, Iran—since that could undermine Islamabad's negotiating leverage with India.

Pakistan has long regarded the Pashtun heartland of Afghanistan as its natural sphere of influence—an objective which has been eroded following the toppling of the Taliban in 2001. Given Islamabad's rapidly diminishing clout in the area and the evolving entente between New Delhi and Kabul, Pakistan is concerned about the possibility that Afghanistan could destabilise the situation along the border in the future. This is because Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province, which border Afghanistan, have witnessed secessionist activities in the past.

It is for these reasons that the Musharraf administration has pursued a

selective approach on the question of limiting militancy. In particular, although it has cooperated with the US in rounding up around 700 middle ranking Al Qaida functionaries, it has deliberately failed to place pressure on either the Kashmiri militants or the remnants of the Taliban.

As per media reports, there are two reasons for this stand. Firstly, the aim is to appease the US by demonstrating that Pakistan supports the so called war on terror. Secondly, it is a means of keeping the Kashmir issue alive in Indo-Pak relations and to sustain pressure on Afghanistan by indirectly encouraging the Taliban.

Negotiating strategy for the Hong Kong Ministerial meet to be finalized next month

The G-20 group of developing countries is expected to finalise its negotiating strategy for the Hong Kong ministerial meet in their meeting in Bhurban, Pakistan

SOURCES say, the declaration to be adopted at the meeting of G-20 group of developing nations in Bhurban, Pakistan would more or less determine the group's bargaining position for the sixth ministerial of the World Trade Organisation (INTO) in Hong Kong in December.

According to media reports, a draft of the G-20 ministerial declaration had already been prepared and handed over to Islamabad. The draft will be modified at the G-20 ministerial on September 9-10 and the

final declaration will be adopted at the end of the meet.

The G-20 comprises developing countries from across the globe, including India, China, Pakistan, Egypt and Brazil.

As a significant development, the tiered tariff reduction formula proposed by the G-20 in the ongoing agricultural talks is gaining acceptance among a number of WTO members, officials said.

As per the formula, developed country tariffs are to be divided into five

bands, while developing country tariffs are to be divided into four bands. Within each band, a linear tariff reduction formula is applied with higher bands attracting a steeper cut. The EU came up with an alternative formula suggesting equal number of bands for both developed and developing countries and progressivity within the bands. This is unacceptable to the G-20 countries.

The G-20 also has to take a decision on its final stand on the domestic and

export subsidies given by developed countries. In its previous ministerial meet in New Delhi earlier this year, the group had demanded that export subsidies should be dismantled in the next five years. The developed countries had not responded positively to this demand.



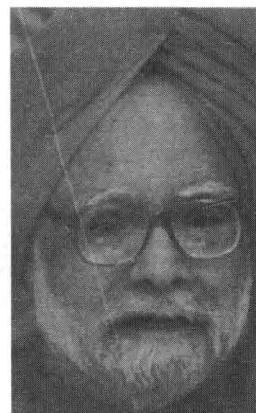
India's message to Afghanistan: Please be cautious of Taliban in Pakistan

AFGHANISTAN has been successful in curbing the Taliban. However, the threat is still there. According to India, the biggest threat to Afghanistan's stability was the "newly emerging threat" of the Taliban operating from Pakistan and it would support the strengthening of Afghanistan's security in every possible way.

Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran has said, "We want Afghanistan to emerge as a democratic, sovereign country; in full mastery of its own destiny. It is in our interest to ensure that Afghanistan does not once again become a centre of extremism or terrorism". This message was given on the eve of the departure of Manmohan Singh to Kabul.

Referring to some recent

incidents, Saran said, "Insurgents from Pakistan are indulging in violent acts in Afghanistan. We have of-



Manmohan Singh

ferred our full support to Afghanistan in dealing with this newly-emerging threat".

He also said India was keen to help Afghanistan

in the reconstruction of its economy, infrastructure and human resources, but denial of transit facilities was a "big constraint".

"Part of the difficulty to reach Afghanistan is that we have to use the circuitous route through Iran as there is no transit facility through Pakistan," Saran said. Even so, he said India was investing in infrastructure development so that Afghanistan was open up.

The prime minister, during his two-day tour was scheduled to announce new projects worth \$50 million to be undertaken by India and expansion of existing programmes and scholarships to take the assistance to a higher level. India is already funding reconstruction projects to the tune of \$500 million.

Petrokaz deal: Kazakh government will stay neutral

NEWS reports say that Kazakh govt will not interfere in the Petrokaz deal.

As per media reports, the Kazakhstan government will not make use of its pre-emption right in the sale of Petro Kazakhstan to China National Petroleum corporation.

The reason given by the Kazakhstan govt is that since it is a deal between the two private companies that has occurred outside a country, the govt won't interfere in the deal.

The govt officials stated that they cannot discriminate between the Indian's and the Chinese. Using pre-emption right would mean that the stake will be with the Kazakh govt and cannot be sold.

Canadian minister's team to visit India

The two countries will explore ways of enhancing bilateral relations especially in trade, science and technology.

A team of Canadian ministers will visit India in October to sign agreements and explore ways of enhancing bilateral relations especially in trade, science and technology.

Canadian high commission officials told media persons, "Since India is one of the fastest growing economies, Canada sees immense potential for cooperation across various sectors, especially infrastructure, infor-

mation technology, environment and agro-food."

They added, "at present the current volume of the two-way India-Canada trade stands at Canadian \$ 2.5 billion and we want this to be doubled by 2010. The trade balance is in favour of India."

According to media reports, giving details of the up coming visit to India by Canadian environment minister, Stephane Dion and

international trade minister, James S Peterson along with prime ministers and ministers of four provinces, the official said his country was looking forward to sign some agreements, including the foreign investment project pact.

The officials also said the two countries had already revised the air services agreement under which the two-way air traffic will grow five times.

The ministers' visit will be followed by the arrival of officials from Canada's natural sciences research education council to attract Indian students.

Responding to a question about the recent labour unrest in the Honda joint venture company in Gurgaon, they said Canada was not apprehensive about the investment in this country and would like to go ahead with its business plans.

Indeed it was sensible for India to vote against Iran

India has voted against Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency, this article discusses how this vote was in Indian interests

RECENTLY, there was an article in a leading Indian daily which stated that it is not in India's interest to have a nuclear capable country in its neighbourhood. Once there is clarity on this subject, assessment of the Iran vote becomes much simpler.

Now a days, in india, a question is arising in every individual's mind. Was India's Iran vote at the International Atomic Energy Agency a cowardly give up to the US? Or was it, as the government claims, an attempt to buy lime, avoid an immediate referral to the UN Security Council and help Iran find a negotiated solution? No one in Iran has been visibly overwhelmed by gratitude for such reprieve. More interesting, perhaps, is to ask how India's voting serves India's interest, rather than Washington's or Tehran's.

People who are criticizing India's vote must get the answer how it is in India's interest for Iran to develop nuclear weapons. This is of fundamental importance.

Even the Indian government is at the fault. India has failed to articulate a nuclear doctrine that reconciles New Delhi's traditional advocacy of universal disarmament with its new-found status as unofficial member of the nuclear club. In the absence of such a doctrine, the political class finds itself bereft of the unanimity that nuclear policy enjoyed prior to the 1998 nuclear tests. The question which arises at this moment is why bother with a formal doctrine. There are two reasons.

A major determinant of foreign policy is domestic opinion, thanks to democracy. It is necessary for

India's foreign policy to address itself to and communicate with popular opinion in the countries that matter. It is not enough to talk to the US administration or to Iran's envoys. New Delhi must seek to get its point of view across to the media of these countries, and through them, to their people. No such attempt seems to have been made in the case of Iran so far. Principle, as endorsed by domestic opinion, will restrain might.

At present we can say that India is too large a nation and too complex and diverse a polity to become anyone's client state. Iran had signed the non-proliferation treaty. It has given away its right to develop nuclear weapons. And it is not in India's interest for another country in its neighbourhood to develop nuclear capability.

Indo-Pak trade cooperation sustainable only if mutually beneficial

TWO-DAY Indo-Pak secretary level talks were held in New Delhi in the beginning of the August. These talks were on economic and commercial cooperation.

Addressing these talks Indian Commerce Secretary, SN Menon said, "allowing more goods through rail, and roads would result in the creation of the jobs with an increase in the ancillary activities along these routes." In these talks India asked Pakistan to allow more commodities for trade through the Wagah-Attari border.

The main thing which came out of these talks was that the trade between the two countries has to be mutually beneficial. A win-win commercial relationship is what is needed for the Indo-Pak trade.

Hindustan-Tibet road in bad shape

MOST people who have driven on the newly-opened old Hindustan-Tibet road describe their experience as an extremely difficult journey. The historic road which was immortalised by Rudyard Kipling in Kim, sprang back to life last month, shortly after the flash floods in Sutlej destroyed wide swathes of the National Highway-22, cutting off the tribal district of Kinnaur from the rest of Himachal Pradesh.

The Kinnaur district, famous for its apples, bore the brunt of the floods due to its proximity to China. Deputy Commissioner, Dr Amandeep Garg said, "the 70-km stretch of the road which has been opened for motor vehicles after over three decades is now the sole road link between Shimla, Rampur Bushahr and Kinnaur district."

A narrow stretch of road that can at best be described as a trekking trail, the old road from Roghi to Tapri is a driver's nightmare. You need nerves of steel to manoeuvre the 30-km-long treacherous stretch, which is widely hailed as

an engineering marvel.

White flags greeted me as I began the journey in a Gypsy, with prayer on my lips. My co-driver, a local, told me they had been erected there in memory of those who had lost their lives here. According to media reports, the road is so narrow that you can't afford to take your eyes off it even for a nano-second. As a local put it, "One wrong step and you are dead." The fast-flowing Sutlej gleams menacingly in the sun. It's the watery grave for many unfortunate drivers.

The makeshift barrier at Roghi, around 6 km, away from Kalpa in Kinnaur district, is manned by the officials of Himachal Police, who inspect the vehicles entering this road.

In the absence of NH-22, which was washed away by the floods of June 26, the everyday supplies, including food, vegetables, groceries, come via this

route. People who come back unscathed are considered very lucky, for the 30-km stretch between Roghi and Tapri has claimed four lives in the past one month.

The residents of Kalpa, Rekong Peo, Roghi and other neighbouring villages heaved a sigh of relief when the government allowed the traffic to move

on the old Hindustan-Tibet road, but the increasing number of fatal accidents on the road has given the Himachal Government enough reasons to expedite repair work on NH-22.

According to media reports, on June 26 flash floods ravaged the state. A huge portion of the National Highway-22 at Karcham was washed away. The Karcham village itself fared no better. The surging waters destroyed the entire market-place, which also housed the two-storeyed telephone exchange. A major stretch of the road connecting Karcham to Sangla valley was also

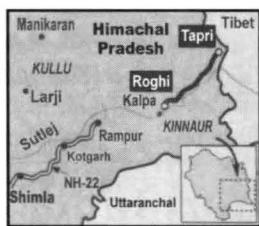
reduced to rubble.

The National Highway connecting two roads one going from Kalpa to Karcham and the other from Kalpa towards Rampur district — is in a bad condition.

The bridge near Karcham which connected the two roads was also washed away in the floods.

Though the Himachal government has built a new bridge a few metres away, the NH-22 is yet to become operational. Senior officials say, the repair and reconstruction work is on schedule. He adds that the 16 major roads, which are blocked at present, would be opened by the end of September. The Border Roads Organisation and the Public Works Department are also contributing their bit to expedite the repair work on the damaged stretches.

It is important to see that the roads, the lifelines of our border regions remain in a proper state as these are one of the important means of reaching far flung places in the need of urgency.



Status quo on Kashmir is unacceptable to Pak

At present the talks between India and Pakistan are proceeding in the right direction, however, the status quo in Kashmir is not acceptable to Pakistan

AT present Pakistani authorities are of the view that the talks between India and Pakistan are proceeding in the right direction, however, the status quo in Kashmir is not acceptable to Pakistan.

This was declared by Pakistan's Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz. Aziz was on an official visit to Japan.

He said, "Islamabad wants India and Kashmiri leaders to resolve the issue. If Kashmir issue is not resolved, it will be extremely unfortunate for the region.

In his address to Japan Institute of International affairs he said, "So far, all three stakeholders haven't been able to sit at the table together and resolve

the issue according to what all three want".

Pakistani leader also mentioned that although India and Pakistan are engaged in confidence building measures both countries must remove the feeling of mistrust for each other.

Meanwhile in another report the Indian media, quoted Pakistan's Foreign

Minister, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri saying that there has been a substantial progress in the concluded talks on nuclear issues.



Shaukat Aziz with Japanese PM Junichiro Koizumi in Tokyo

India to Nepal: The quality of INSAS rifles is not inferior

THERE are reports in the Indian media that there is no reality when the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA), the Indian INSAS assault rifles for the reverses it is suffering against the Maoists in the landlocked kingdom. RNA's criticism about what it calls "sub-standard" INSAS (Indian Small Arms System) rifles has more to do with "politics" than anything else, in keeping with Nepal's strategy to play on Indian fears that it could turn to a third country like China or Pakistan for arms supplies.

According to reports, the 1.13 million strong Indian Army, the third largest in the world, should know about the 5.56mm INSAS rifles since it has inducted around five lakh of them since 1997-98. With an "effective 400-metre range" and capable of being fired either in single shots or three-round bursts, INSAS rifles have replaced the cumbersome 7.62 mm SLR (self-loading rifle) as the standard basic weapon for all infantry battalions.

"We are using INSAS rifles in counter-insurgency operations in extreme terrains ranging from Jammu and Kashmir to the North-East on a daily basis. If we can use them successfully in much more intense operations, there is no reason that RNA cannot," said a senior officer. According to senior officers, "RNA needs to be trained to handle the rifles better. A soldier's personal weapon, after all, is like his wife...it's got to be treated and maintained well."

The Army is ready to train RNA once again on the "correct usage" of INSAS rifles, like it did in 2004. RNA soldiers are neglecting to maintain the rifles properly. "Our jawans are told to clean and oil their rifles everyday to avoid carbon deposits in the barrels," said an officer.

INSAS rifles did have teething problems in the initial phases. There were, for instance, complaints of "cold arrest breakage and cracking of components, particularly the semi-trans-



parent bullet magazines, in high-altitude areas like Kargil.

Consequently, one lakh AK-47 rifles were imported from Romania in 1995 as an "interim measure" for "close-quarter fighting" during counter-insurgency operations. The defects in INSAS rifles were, however, rectified later. "The plastic magazines, for instance, were reinforced with stronger material. We accepted INSAS rifles and light-machine guns after extensive trials but rejected the INSAS carbines," he said. The Army now uses "a mix" of AK-47 and INSAS rifles in

battling militants.

Though the world-famous AK-47s are definitely more rugged and do not jam at all, INSAS rifles are considered virtually on par with them. "Moreover, we are now using night-sights or Image intensifiers on INSAS rifles, which we can't do with AK-47s. Similarly, INSAS can launch HE-36 grenades. Though they jam once in a while if not properly maintained, INSAS have proven very effective in our operations," said the officer. This clearly shows that the charges regarding the poor quality of rifles is totally baseless.

Train them harder, train them best

Indian army is going to train the members of the British Special Air Service (SAS)

INDIAN army is the best in this world. Indian army has numerous times foiled the bad intentions of the enemy. We all know this, now it is going to have another feather in its cap. If the latest media reports are to be believed then the Indian army is going to train the members of the British Special Air Service (SAS).

Reports say that Indian Army will train SAS paratroopers in the art of mountain warfare. According to these reports, the soldiers shall be trained in the Army's High Altitude Warfare School. This training by the Indian army is aimed at improving the mountain region fighting skills of the British troops.

To make the training

more practical, special courses have been devised by the Indian Army. The SAS men shall be trained with Ghatak commandos of the Indian Army. These Ghatak commandos are involved in counter terrorism operations in J&K.

This high quality training by the Indian army trainers would definitely make these British Air Ser-



vice troops more capable and more competent.

Be alert: We are surrounded by failed states

INDIA is a rapidly developing economy. Most of the Indian sectors have recorded growth in the past few years. This is something every Indian is feeling good about. However, it is of no use for India to progress if it is surrounded by failed states.

In the mid of August there were reports in the Indian print media that India is surrounded by failed states. This report was based on a study by foreign policy, a journal of the Carnegie Endowment for International peace, and

the fund for peace.

This report ranked 60 states in the world that are in danger of going over the edge. This report stated that India is surrounded by either failed or failing states.

In this report the failed state index is based on 12 economic social and political parameters. These parameters include demographic pressure, refugee and displaced people, group grievances, human exodus, uneven development, economic decline, delegitimisation of states, public ser-

vices, human rights, security apparatus, fractionalised elites and external intervention.

According to this report, Bangladesh is at level 17, Pakistan at rank 34, Nepal at 35, Myanmar is at 23 and Bhutan is at 26. Afghanistan is at rank 11.

These failing states pose a great danger to India, especially to India's economy and security. As we all know that these failed or failing states are the breeding ground for many unwanted elements, such as terrorism, mass

immigration, drug abuse, poverty and disease and weapons. One can practically see these problems emerging in South Asia. There is mass exodus of Bangladeshis to India, Nepal is under the grip of Maoists, Afghanistan is under the pressure of Taliban and narcotics and Sri-Lanka is reeling under the atrocities of LTTE.

Indian policy makers must take this report seriously and see to it that the neighbouring states also turn from failed or failing states to developing states.

Defence purchases: Are we going blind in love for US?

US authorities are ready to provide USS Trenton, the 34 year old US warship to India at a low cost

USS Trenton, the 34 year old US warship might find an entry into the Indian Navy if the US defence personnel are able to convince Indian authorities. There are reports in the Indian media that the US Navy was keen on selling this warship to India at a low price.

USS Trenton was built by Lockheed Shipbuilding Company. USS Trenton was commissioned on March 6, 1971. It has a displacement of 16,900 tons and operates at a maximum speed of 21 knots. The weapon suite of USS Trenton includes a fast reaction, rapid fire 20mm gun.

This warship is mainly used to transport men and material during battles.

If the project materialises, it will be the first American warship for the Indian Navy. Till now all the acquisitions for the Indian Navy has been either from the US or Russia.

Many Indian Navy per-

sonnel are of the view that India should not become a dumping ground for the old warships that US wants to dump. Indian authorities should keep in mind that it is OK for India to align with US but it should not be at the cost of security and strength of the Indian defence.

Terrorism: Is Bangladesh becoming Pakistan?

RECENTLY, there was a bang of bomb blasts in Bangladesh. There was a wave of 400 bomb blasts in Bangladesh. After these bomb blasts India immediately sealed its borders in West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura.

These bomb blasts in Bangladesh opened the eyes of the world leaders who were till now thinking that Pakistan is the place of origin of such activities.

There were reports in the Indian media which underlined that these blasts in

Bangladesh brought to the notice of the world that it is not only Pakistan where they have to focus but also other countries which might be the incubators of future jihadis.

Media reports from the west stated that now the time has come for the west to pay urgent attention to the apparent strengthening

of the radical Islamist voice in Bangladesh.

Western world was terrified when they realized that the leaflets issued by the outlawed Jamatul Mujahideen at the site of the explosions carried anti-Bush and anti-Blair warnings.

Reports said, many foreign-policy experts and European Diplomats were of the view that these bombs had merely reinforced

Bangladesh's dangerous parallels with Pakistan.

As per many foreign policy experts, Khaleda Zia is at present facing a mounting conflict, her government is extremely dependent on religious parties, such as Jamat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote. Reports say that she has been unable to control the Pakistan like phenomenon of mushrooming madarsas in Bangladesh.

Traditional Indian *phetas* (turbans), *jhandas* (flags) and *apdagiris* (decorative signs) find their way to Philadelphia

A little bit of Pune will travel to New Jersey in Philadelphia this Ganeshotsav. Actually, yards of it. What will connect them with Pune are the *phetas* (turbans), *jhandas* (flags) and *apdagiris* (decorative signs) all made by city-based Murudkar Jhande wale. On Anant Chaturdashi (September 17) when lakhs of Ganesh devotees in the country will be out on roads to bid farewell, a group will be doing the same in New Jersey. The New Jersey Maharashtra Mandal had placed an order of 25 *phetas*, 45

flags and two *abdagiris* that were sent in the month of August.

The *phetas* can be worn by any person and remains in shape even after multiple use—the fabric is specially treated so that it doesn't lose its crispness and breathes well. An expert maker takes about 10 hours to make one.

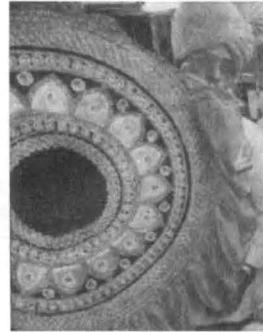
Though the rain and floods have been a damper, and orders have been considerably less, it helped them complete their order and send the consignment to New Jersey.

"We got the order only 15 days ago. Had it been

a normal year, we would not have been able to deliver," says Girish Murudkar, the owner of the shop.

"They traced our shop from Internet references," says Murudkar. I am making a last minute check of the crisp folds in the readymade *phetas*. The Murudkars shot into limelight in February when they made a *pheta* for Prince Charles at the behest of Mumbai's dabbawalas.

Reports say that it's not the first time the *phetas* are going abroad. Individual orders from European countries, Australia,



and US have been there. "This is the first time that we have had a bulk order from abroad. More than the business, it is heartening to know that somebody is carrying on with our traditions in the foreign soil," says Murudkar.

IPR for Indian Music

INDIA is pitching for inclusion of IPR for traditional knowledge (TK) and



folklore in the WTO's trade

related intellectual property rights (Trips) agreement. This would bring Indian traditional music under the protection of the IPR cover.

Currently Indian traditional music is being reproduced and marketed by music companies in India and abroad without any benefits accruing to the creators. India's

Copyrights Act does not safeguard traditional music.

A campaign by India, Brazil and other developing countries to dovetail the IPR-related clause on TK in another multilateral forum—the Convention on Biological Diversity into TRIPs is, however, being frustrated by the US and Japan.

"Nuances of traditional

music are passed on from generation to generation automatically. To trace their origin is largely unfeasible," stated a senior official from the ministry of human resource development. Hence, any single community or person would find it hard to prove its/his IPR credentials, particularly without proper documentation, he said.

Indian Sculpture at Christie's auction

INDIAN art is now been recognized the world over. S H Raza and Tayeb Mehta's paintings are a favourite for an art collector be it India or

abroad. Tayeb Mehta's *Mahisasura* recently fetched a high value at the Christie's exhibition.

There is a lot of awareness regarding the modern Indian paintings but the segment of modern Indian sculpture is still untapped.

Now the latest news is that Christie's auction will include modern Indian Sculptures. This is indeed positive news for the Indian sculptors, who will now have a chance of displaying their creations and chances of picking a

good price if their work gets appreciated.

The sculpture section will include a bronze figure of a bull by Tayeb Mehta; estimated cost \$60,000 to \$90,000 and a bronze work by Dhruva Mistry, an internationally recognized sculptor.



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