

Dawn, 1 December 2005

Neelum waters: Pakistan to seek arbitration (Khaleeq Kiani)

ISLAMABAD, Nov 30: Pakistan on Wednesday decided to seek setting up of a Court of Arbitration or appointment of a neutral expert to stop India from diverting Neelum waters in violation of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz presided over a meeting of all stakeholders here on Tuesday and directed to examine the dispute from all legal and technical aspects whether Pakistan should seek appointment of a neutral expert or setting up of a court of arbitration under the aegis of the World Bank. A senior official of the water and power ministry told Dawn that Pakistan would most probably seek establishment of a court of arbitration because the dispute involved inter-tributary transfer of water which was more of a legal issue than a technical one.

Daily Times, 1 December 2005

Objection to military attach's presence: Pakistani HC won't attend IAF function

LAHORE: Pakistan's High Commissioner in New Delhi Aziz Ahmed Khan has turned down an invitation to speak at the Indian College of Air Warfare in Secunderabad as the Indian Ministry of External Affairs has refused to allow Pakistan's air attaché to travel with him. Foreign Office sources confirmed that Khan would not go to Secunderabad for the December 2 invitation from the Indian air headquarters processed through the Ministry of Defence. "This was the first invitation to the high commissioner by the Indian Defence Ministry and it was accepted by the high commissioner. As per diplomatic norms, Pakistani air attaché was also expected to travel," sources said. They added the invitation was turned down because the Indian Ministry of External Affairs had not allowed the air attaché to travel with Khan.

Dawn, 2 December 2005

India refuses to accept list: 25 cross LoC at Kaman post (Tariq Naqash)

MUZAFFARABAD, Dec 1: Indian authorities declined to accept the lists of intending travellers from Azad Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday as 25 Kashmiris from both sides crossed the Line of Control (LoC) on foot from the Chakothi-Uri crossing point. Those who walked across the dividing line included 16 fresh travellers from held Kashmir but there was no new traveller from the AJK side. Other than them, four and five returning residents of AJK and held Kashmir, also crossed the LoC to reunite with their families. The crossing from the AJK side took place at about 1pm and two hours later from the held side through a footbridge laid over a stream marking the LoC. The fresh travellers from held Kashmir, included four women and 12 men, and according to Mr Kayani, their names had already been cleared by the AJK authorities for the trans-LoC bus service which had to be suspended after the Oct 8 earthquake.

Daily Times, 2 December 2005

Militant camps still exist in Pakistan: India (Iftikhar Gilani)

NEW DELHI: India claimed on Thursday that militant training camps still exist in Pakistan and Kashmir, as well as in Bangladesh along its eastern border. "Pakistan has so far not taken any significant action to dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism, such as launching pads, training camps, communications and funding", which the Indian government has "continuously stressed in its interaction with Pakistan at all levels", Minister of State for External Affairs Minister Rao Inderjit Singh told the Rajya Sabha (Upper House). "The government has always clearly stated that the India-Pakistan dialogue process can only be conducted in a terrorism-free atmosphere, and is critically dependent on the fulfilment of the January 6, 2004 commitment by President Musharraf (on the sidelines of the SAARC summit) not to allow territory under Pakistan's control to be used for terrorism," Singh said.

The Hindu , 2 December 2005

Muzaffarabad bus service resumes (Shujaat Bukhari)

SRINAGAR: The Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service resumed on Thursday with 25 people crossing the Line of Control (LoC) at the Kaman Post near Uri. While 20 crossed from the Indian side, five stranded passengers in Pakistan occupied Kashmir returned home after two months. Official sources said the 20 passengers embarked on their journey from the Tourist Reception Centre at Salamabad near Uri as all of them belonged to the same area. While 16 freshers had applied for travel permits weeks ago, four passengers from PoK were stranded in this part of Kashmir after the October earthquake. The bus, named "Caravan-e-Aman," could not be run from Srinagar on Thursday as none of the passengers had to board from here, said the sources. "The crossing marked the resumption of the stalled bus service," Lt. Col. V.K. Batra, defence spokesman, told The Hindu .

The Hindu , 3 December 2005

Help resolve Kashmir dispute, Musharraf tells U.S. (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has urged the United States to lend its support to efforts aimed at resolving the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, "which is at the root of tension in South Asia." Talking a seven-member U.S. Congressional delegation, led by co-chairs of the Pakistan Caucus Dan Burton (Republican)

and Sheila Jackson Lee (Democrat) here on Thursday, he underscored the importance of moving towards a settlement of the Kashmir dispute in the interest of durable peace and stability in the region. An official statement said the delegation expressed support for the peace process to resolve all outstanding issues between India and Pakistan. It said the delegation lauded the cooperation Pakistan was extending to the international community in the fight against terrorism and supported its efforts to promote regional peace and stability. The delegation is on a three-day visit to Pakistan.

Daily Times, 3 December 2005

Pakistan and India signing MoU on counter-narcotics

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and India agreed on Friday to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation between their counter-narcotics agencies in fighting drug trafficking in the region. The agreement came after a two-day meeting between anti-narcotics officials of the two countries in Rawalpindi. Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery, the Anti Narcotics Force director general, headed the Pakistani delegation while the Indian side was led by Narcotics Control Bureau Director General KC Verma. A joint statement issued after the seventh round of director general-level talks said that realising the region's sensitivity to transit-trafficking of drugs, both sides emphasised closer co-operation between their drug law-enforcement agencies.

Daily Times, 3 December 2005

Independent Kashmir will aid India: PML-N

LAHORE: An independent Kashmir is affordable to India but would risk Pakistan's integrity and solidarity, said Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) Central Finance Secretary Pervaiz Malik. Addressing a party workers' meeting on Friday, he said the people of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir would reject any solution that made Pakistan lose Azad Kashmir liberated in 1947. He said India would never negotiate on an issue that benefits Pakistan and Azad Kashmir and is against its own interest, which means a solution favouring India was being prepared and would be imposed. He criticised India for accelerating allegations of infiltration at the time of a natural calamity in Azad Kashmir to sabotage international aid and said India did nothing remarkable for earthquake victims except opening the Line of Control, which benefited India.

The Hindu, 4 December 2005

Pakistan suggests dates for talks on rail link (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has proposed technical-level talks on the Khokrapar-Munnabao rail route, linking Sindh with Rajasthan, from December 11 to 15. The talks are scheduled to be held in New Delhi. Both sides have agreed, in principle, to begin the rail link by January 1. Foreign Office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam told the media that Pakistan awaited confirmation from India on the proposed dates. According to diplomatic sources New Delhi should not have any problems with the dates. The talks, to be attended by Railway officials from both sides, would cover issues such as frequency of the train service, the fares and the issue of visas.

The Hindu, 5 December 2005

Pakistan suggests dates for talks on rail link (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

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The Nation, 5 December 2005

Pak to use two options against Kishanganga (DILSHAD AZEEM)

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan is likely to avail two options simultaneously-move for appointment of neutral expert and setting up of arbitration court-to stop India from constructing its Kishanganga project, The Nation has learnt reliably here. "Kishanganga is not purely a technical issue therefore we are to move for both options, seeking appointment of neutral expert and the court of arbitration simultaneously," sources in the Ministry of Water and Power said when contacted. Work on availing these two options is being carried out since Permanent Commission on Indus Waters (PCIW) proposed to Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz that Pakistan should not confine the Kishanganga project only to the technical level, but other legal aspects under the Waters Treaty 1960 should also be followed.

The Nation, 5 December 2005

India rejects demilitarisation proposal (SHAIQ HUSSAIN)

ISLAMABAD - India has partially rejected Pakistan's proposal on Kashmir's demilitarisation and self-governance by refusing to withdraw troops from held valley, thus frustrating Islamabad's hopes for conclusive talks on the vital plan. "Talks between the South Asian nuclear nations are underway through back channel diplomacy on proposed self-governance for Kashmiris, but India has conveyed its opposition to demilitarisation of held valley, saying it must be dropped from the plan," said an official here requesting anonymity. "India is not averse to talk on Kashmiris' self-governance through secret diplomacy but it is not willing to withdraw troops from the disputed Himalayan region," he added.

The Tribune, 6 December 2005

Amritsar-Lahore bus from Dec 23

CHANDIGARH: The much awaited Amritsar-Lahore bus service is finally scheduled to start from December 23 with the first bus coming in from Lahore on that day while the first bus from Amritsar will depart on December 27. The Punjab Government will be requesting the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, to flag off the Indian bus from Amritsar. Originally the bus service was to start on November 9 and the Prime Minister was scheduled to flag it off. This had been postponed in view of the massive earthquake in Pakistan in the first week of October. It was then opined that holding a ceremony or launching of a new bus service between the two neighbours at that time of crisis in Pakistan could send wrong signals and the fragile friendship could be soured, officials said.

The Tribune, 6 December 2005

Pak not to relocate quake survivors in PoK

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided in principle that its rehabilitation plan for quake-hit people of occupied Kashmir would not involve any relocation and those who had lost their homes would receive shelters in their respective areas, a federal minister said on Saturday. Speaking at a news briefing following a marathon meeting on relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation in occupied Kashmir, Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Makhdoom Faisal Saleh Hayat said the road-map for reconstruction would be designed in light of the seismic survey reports prepared by experts from China, Turkey, Japan and Italy.

Times Of India, 6 December 2005

Despite CBMs, Pak radio still backs Khalistan

LAHORE: Even as India and Pakistan immerse themselves in unending bouts of CBMs, an official Pakistani Punjabi radio programme is still out doing what it has since ages - promote a Khalistani agenda 25 years old. An hour after the kirtan aired by SGPC ends at 6 pm, Pakistan radio's 'Punjabi Darbar' programme begins. In between the kirtan comes a rabid anti-India outburst for five minutes. But the programme makers are careful in not attacking Sikhs. The butt of criticism is the brahminical order of Hindus which they call "Baman."

Daily Times, 6 December 2005

India, Pakistan trying to reconcile Geelani and Mirwaiz? (Iftikhar Gilani)

NEW DELHI: Rival Hurriyat Conference leaders Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq are travelling to Saudi Arabia this week in an alleged attempt by the Indian and Pakistani governments to bring about a reconciliation between the two. Mirwaiz has regularly travelled abroad in the past and will represent the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) in the extraordinary summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), where the APHC has an observer status. Geelani's passport was seized in 1983, and he has since been denied permission to travel abroad. However, the Indian government has granted him permission to travel to Saudi Arabia to perform Haj, for which he is scheduled to leave on December 7.

Dawn, 6 December 2005

Abdullah will take Musharraf's peace message to India

NEW DELHI: For the first time in 50 years, a Saudi king will visit India next month, but not without bringing with him a message of peace from Pakistan's President Gen Pervez Musharraf and from Kashmir's Hurriyat Conference, informed sources said on Monday. King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz has been invited by New Delhi to be the chief guest at India's Republic Day parade held annually on Jan 26, official sources said. The informal Indian announcement of the landmark visit coincides with a special summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) called on Dec 7-8 in Makkah by King Abdullah. Gen Musharraf will be present at the closed door meeting along with Kashmir's Mirwaiz Maulvi Umar Farooq, the current Hurriyat chairman.

The News, 6 December 2005

India is not flexible: Omar Abdullah

ISLAMABAD: In what is construed as a conciliatory note, Omar Abdullah, President National Conference in occupied Kashmir and son of former chief minister Farooq Abdullah said on Monday that his views on Pakistan had changed and he was cautiously optimistic about the future of Kashmir. "But India is not flexible and I believe that the government of India should be more flexible," he said. Speaking on Geo TV's talk show "Follow-Up With

Fahd" he said that not only was he looking forward to meeting with the Pakistani leadership but also with politicians in his age group. The government is in the process of giving a final clearance to the visit of Omar Abdullah, Jammu and Kashmir's People's Democratic Party's Mehbooba Mufti and some other Kashmiris leaders from IHK who have traditionally maintained strong links with New Delhi.

The Hindu, 7 December 2005

India-Pakistan shipping talks from tomorrow (B Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD: Officials of India and Pakistan will hold technical talks in the port city of Karachi from Thursday to review the India-Pakistan Shipping protocol of 1975 to enable ships of both countries to pick up cargo for a third country party. The two-day talks are a follow up to the decision by the Joint Study Group, to enhance economic and commercial cooperation, of the two countries at its meeting in New Delhi in the second week of August. The 1975 protocol does not allow shipping companies of both the countries to pick up transshipment cargoes for a third country party. Under the protocol Indian flag vessels can only pick up cargoes from an Indian port to be dropped at a Pakistani port, and vice versa. The shipping industry is of the view that if the protocol is amended to lift the restriction, cargo flow between Indian and Pakistani ports could increase dramatically.

Dawn, 7 December 2005

Kashmir solution to promote peace: PM: Holistic approach against terror urged

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Tuesday a just settlement of the Kashmir dispute was a fundamental aspect of the ongoing peace process with India. "Progress has been made in our composite dialogue process (with India) and we hope it will help in promoting peace and cooperation in South Asia," he said at a banquet he hosted for the visiting Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg. Reiterating desire for peace and stability in the region, he said Pakistan was seeking resolution of all differences with India. Mr Aziz reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment in the global fight against terrorism but called for a holistic approach to stamp out the menace by addressing its root causes.

Dawn, 8 December 2005

Railway link discussed with Indian envoy

KARACHI: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement on Wednesday discussed Pakistan-India relations and other issues with the Indian High Commissioner here on Wednesday. According to a party press release, the MQM coordination committee hosted a luncheon meeting with Indian High Commissioner Shiv Shankar Menon at a local hotel. Mr Menon attended the luncheon with his wife and discussed matters of mutual interest and bilateral relations. The Indian diplomat informed the MQM team that the Monabao-Khokhrapar railway link would become operational by January next year. The Indian consulate in Karachi would also start functioning by that time. He was of the view that meetings between people of Pakistan and India should continue which would help improve relations.

Daily Times, 8 December 2005

India urges tariff concessions on another 271 items

ISLAMABAD: India has requested Pakistan to exclude 271 tradable items from its negative list and allow tariff concession on such items under the SAFTA agreement to be effective from Jan 1, an official told the Daily Times on Wednesday. Pakistan is expected to reply before Dec 31 to the Indian request, the official added. Pakistan has decided to place 1,310 items on its negative list for protection of its industries and trade under the SAFTA agreement. India will be limiting its negative list to 929 items. The two countries would not be allowing tariff concession on these items under the SAFTA agreement.

The Tribune, 9 December 2005

India's response not positive, says Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: Asserting that the October 8 earthquake in the Kashmir province on both sides of the LoC did help create opportunities to resolve Kashmir issue, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf said today that India's response to Pakistani proposal for self-governance in Jammu and Kashmir was not positive so far. About the proposal of de-militarisation in Kashmir, he said "the (Indian) response has not been positive so far but we need to take it forward." Addressing a press conference at the end of the summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in Makkah, Musharraf said the Kashmir issue was being addressed by both India and Pakistan. He said the Makkah Summit of the OIC, in which moderate Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq had taken part, recognised the need to address the Kashmir issue and similar disputes confronting Muslim countries by having a conflict resolution mechanism in its new charter.

Dawn, 9 December 2005

Amristar bus trial next week

NEW DELHI: The trial run of the Amritsar-Lahore bus service will take place on Sunday by the Indian operator

and on Tuesday by the Pakistani operator. The trial run had earlier been scheduled for last October but was postponed due to the earthquake, official spokesperson said here on Thursday during a media briefing. The meeting to finalize the Amritsar-Nankana Sahib bus service will take place on Dec 20-21 in Islamabad, added the spokesperson. India and Pakistan had agreed in September this year on starting Lahore-Amritsar bus service on a regular basis at the second round of two-day technical level talks on the operationalization of Amritsar-Lahore and Amritsar-Nankana Sahib bus services.

Daily Times, 9 December 2005

Pakistan and India agree to open ports

KARACHI: Shipping experts from Pakistan and India have agreed to allow shipping companies under flags of these two countries to transport cargo to any third country using each other's port facilities. They also endorsed that seafarers from either side should be employed in each other's shipping lines. This is expected to mainly benefit Pakistan, which has more than 20,000 seafarers searching for jobs. Head of the Pakistani negotiating team and Shipping Ministry Joint Secretary Hassan Zaidi told reporters that Indian experts welcomed their proposals which would become part of an accord soon. "Now our seafarers can sign in and off in each other's country," he said. Susheel Kumar, the Indian Ministry of Shipping joint secretary, who is leading his team, said that the meeting had decided to repeal articles of the Pak-India Shipping Protocol-1975 to match the current needs of regional and international markets. "We want to open ourselves for 3rd flag carriers," he said, adding this would bring more business to both countries. He said an experts' meeting would finalise the contents of the revised protocol which would be formally signed by the two governments after approval by their cabinets. Mr Kumar said that there had been no viable plan yet to start a ferry service between both countries.

Times Of India, 10 December 2005

OIC supports Pak on Kashmir

DUBAI: Toeing Pakistan's line, the 57-member Organisation of Islamic Countries has "extended" its support to the "inalienable right" of people of Jammu and Kashmir for "self-determination" in accordance with the UN resolutions. In a declaration issued after the two-day summit of the grouping in Mecca, attended among others by Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf, OIC also called for "respect of the human rights of the Kashmiri people and agreed to provide all possible political and diplomatic support to the representatives of Kashmiri people." Addressing the conference, Musharraf, raising the Kashmir issue at the summit on Wednesday, had said "failure to resolve Kashmir and Palestine issues led to desperation, confusion and extremism" and asked Islamic countries to ban extremist groups.

Dawn, 10 December 2005

Musharraf backs new initiatives, claims Mirwaiz

NEW DELHI: All Parties' Hurriyat Conference leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said on Friday that President Gen Pervez Musharraf had assured him of Islamabad's support for the idea of 'united states of Kashmir' as part of efforts to resolve the dispute with India. The Mirwaiz told Dawn on phone from Makkah that he had held a detailed meeting with Gen Musharraf on Thursday on the margins of the OIC summit, where the Kashmiri representative was a special invitee. "President Musharraf said he whole-heartedly supports our stand for a united states of Kashmir," the Mirwaiz said. "He said he wants to end any unnatural division of the region." The Mirwaiz is planning to visit Pakistan later this month either by the land route opened recently for earthquake relief, or by air, depending on India's response.

Daily Times, 10 December 2005

Facilitation of trade with India through Wagah discussed

ISLAMABAD: Dr Salman Shah, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance, Revenue, Economic Affairs and Statistics, held a meeting with senior officials of the ministries of foreign affairs, food and agriculture, interior, statistics, Revenue Divisions, Pakistan Rangers and custom authorities to discuss ways to facilitate import of food items from India through Wagah border land route. The representative from Pakistan Rangers gave a briefing about the impediments in the way of Pakistan-India trade through the land route.

The News, 10 December 2005

Pakistan wants India to simplify visa rules (Khalid Mustafa)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will formally take up with India the issue of making visa procedure easier for Pakistani importers and establishment of quarantine stations on Indian side of Wagah-Attari border to ensure the smooth and efficient import of five food items from India to contain the rising inflation in the country. Pakistan has also waived off Rs 75 quarantine fee per animal to be imported from India to provide solace to livestock importers. Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock has issued a notification, a senior government official at Finance Ministry told The News. The official said that the decision was taken by Dr Salman Shah, adviser to prime minister on finance, revenue, economic affairs and statistics in a meeting held on Friday with senior officials from

Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Food and Agriculture, Interior, Statistics and Revenue Divisions, Pakistan Rangers and Custom authorities to discuss ways to facilitate import of food items with India through Wagah Border land route.

Hindustan Times, 11 December 2005

First Amritsar-Lahore bus crosses over to Pak

WAGAH: The First Amritsar-Lahore bus, on a trial run, crossed over to Pakistan through the land route at the Indo-Pak Wagah border on Sunday. The bus started from the youth hostel, which has been made the international terminal for the bus service, at 9 am. The bus, which carried nine passengers, crossed the Radcliffe at 10.40 am. It would return to Amritsar on Monday.

Dawn, 11 December 2005

Kashmiris protest HR violations

SRINAGAR: Separatists in occupied-Kashmir accused India's army of violating human rights and appealed for UN intervention as they staged protest marches on Saturday to mark International Human Rights Day. Police broke up a small march by activists of the main separatist alliance, Hurriyat, in the summer capital Srinagar and detained four separatists. "They have been detained for violating law and order," a police officer at the scene said. But another group of protesters presented a petition to the small United Nations office in Srinagar that monitors the ceasefire along the Line of Control.

Daily Times, 11 December 2005

Pakistan, India revise shipping protocol

KARACHI: Pakistan and India have agreed to allow each others' ships to carry third country cargo from ports in the two countries. The two sides agreed to a revised Protocol on Shipping after three days of technical talks in Karachi that ended on December 10, said Susheel Kumar, India's joint secretary for shipping, and SM Hasan Zaidi, Pakistan's joint secretary for ports and shipping, at a joint press conference here on Saturday. The agreement will increase the tonnage carried by ships from both countries and also result in competitive shipping rates, they said.

The Hindu, 12 December 2005

Now bus to Lahore from Amritsar

CHANDIGARH: History was made along the Radcliffe line, when the much-awaited trial run of the first Amritsar-Lahore bus service began on Sunday morning. The bus carrying nine passengers crossed over to Pakistan through the Wagah route. The Immigrations officials at Wagah said the first nine aboard the bus christened "Punjab" were Punjab Transport Secretary A.K. Talwar; Director Narinderjit Singh; State Transport Commissioner Iqbal Singh Sidhu; Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar K.D.S. Bhullar; two drivers; two liaison officers and a Punjab Roadways official. The 45-seater airconditioned bus, hired from a private company, began its journey from the Youth Hostel, which has been designated as the international terminal for the service. The bus will return on Monday morning.

The Indian Express, 12 December 2005

Pak overtures bring Israel blip back on India radar

TEL AVIV: Caught on the backfoot by Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's tactical overtures towards Tel Aviv, New Delhi has hurriedly brought back Israel on its radar with the Joint Working Group (JWG) on Defence Cooperation meeting on December 15 and reviving, after a four-year hiatus, the strategic dialogue between the two countries' National Security Advisors next month. Israel's National Security Advisor Giora Eiland was scheduled to arrive in New Delhi on December 23 to start talks with his counterpart M K Narayanan but had to defer it on personal grounds. He is now expected next month and diplomats are working out the dates. Official sources said discussions between the two are going to revolve round Iran's nuclear issue, Islamic fundamentalism, exchange of counter-terror intelligence and the effectiveness of Israeli's counter-infiltration devices along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir.

Tribune, 12 December 2005

Militants in PoK undertake relief work

ISLAMABAD: Over half a dozen militant groups are actively involved in relief and rehabilitation work in the quake-affected areas of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), indicating that jihadi outfits have managed to sustain themselves, despite being banned by the government for their terrorist activities, Pakistan media reports said. With the blessings of the Pakistan Government, most of the banned groups are working under different names and have set up field hospitals, makeshift operation theatres and medical camps at various places in the PoK. "Their volunteers are working round the clock to help the quake survivors," the media reports said. PoK Prime Minister Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan recently met banned Lashkar-e-Toiba former Chief Hafiz Saeed at the "PM

House" in Muzaffarabad to thank him for his group's active involvement in relief operations.

Dawn, 12 December 2005

Accord on ferry service finalized

KARACHI: Pakistan and India have finalised a draft agreement which will pave the way to restart a ferry service between Karachi and Mumbai that was broken off 30 years ago, officials said Sunday. The two countries agreed on a draft on Saturday to revise a shipping protocol between them after three days of talks here, Anwer Shah, director-general of ports and shipping ministry told AFP. The revised protocol would allow Pakistan and India to lift third country's cargo from each other's ports, he said. The protocol would be signed after completion of formalities by the two governments, he said but gave no specific date.

Daily Times, 12 December 2005

Possible options on Kashmir: Pakistan more flexible than India

LAHORE: Kuldeep Nayar, a leading journalist, peace activist and former member of the Rajya Sabha proposed maximum autonomy for the Indian and Pakistani sides of Kashmir except for foreign, defence and communication affairs. He said that free movement across the Line of Control (LoC) was the most feasible solution to the Kashmir issue. Noted Pakistani intellectuals have urged that India should show flexibility in its stance to resolve issues between India and Pakistan, including Kashmir, because Pakistan has come a long way in this regard. Demilitarisation in Kashmir was deeply linked to democracy in Pakistan, they said at "Possible Options on Kashmir", a special lecture at Avari Hotel on Sunday. The Punjab chapter of the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) organised the lecture in collaboration with the Eqbal Ahmad Foundation.

Hindustan Times, 13 December 2005

Indo-Pak pipeline: Iran open to Russia's involvement

TEHRAN: Iran is open to Russian involvement in an ambitious multibillion dollar plan to supply India and Pakistan with piped natural gas, the foreign ministry was quoted as saying on Monday. "The issue has been brought up. Russia is a powerful country with advanced technology. If the Indians and Pakistanis agree, and I don't think they would have serious opposition, these countries can cooperate and go ahead with the project," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said. In June, India signed a deal worth \$22 billion for Tehran to supply five million tonnes of liquefied natural gas annually over a 25-year period from 2009 and also a memorandum of cooperation on the construction of a multibillion-dollar gas pipeline from Iran through Pakistan.

Daily Times, 13 December 2005

India should be flexible: FO

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan said on Monday that it was committed to the peace process with India, but that the latter needed to be flexible for the composite dialogue to succeed. Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Tasnim Aslam said at her weekly press briefing that India and Pakistan were sincerely engaged in the peace process and had also been discussing the Kashmir issue. She said Pakistan needed India to be flexible so that the composite dialogue could succeed. About the opening of visa offices in Lahore and Amritsar, the spokesperson said, "There has been no such proposal so far." She said India and Pakistan would open consulates from the beginning of 2006, which would help resolve some problems faced by people in getting visas.

The News, 13 December 2005

'Made in India' label on relief goods irks Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has expressed "political sensitivity" towards certain relief items coming from India with the label of "Made in India" for use in the earthquake devastated areas. Earlier it had turned down helicopters flown by Indian pilots because of these "sensitivities". Meanwhile, the government says it is in the process of identifying items for reconstruction phase of the earthquake-devastated areas in relation to the Indian standing offer of \$ 25 million. When asked, a Foreign Office spokesperson told The News that initially New Delhi had announced a detailed proposal at the donors conference in Geneva but later in a positive turn of events, it asked Pakistan to identify the necessary items worth \$25 million.

The Nation, 13 December 2005

Croat to head India-Pakistan Observer Group

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Secretary General has appointed Maj Gen Dragutin Repinc of Croatia as the head of the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), it was announced Monday. Gen Repinc, 46, will replace Maj Gen Guido Dante Palmieri of Italy who left the mission in September. The Gen has been an instructor at the Croatian Command Staff School, the war school for military operations other than war including peace support operations and served as commander of the Officers School. From 1999 to 2003, he served as Chief of the Operational Planning Division, General Staff.

The Hindu, 14 December 2005

Pakistan conducts dry run of bus service

WAGAH (PUNJAB): A dry run from Lahore to Amritsar was conducted by Pakistan on Tuesday with a bus carrying eight officials crossing into India through the Atari-Wagah joint check post. The bus crossed Radcliffe Line at the JCP on the International Border here at 10.55 a.m. with officials led by Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation Managing Director Hasim Khan. The Pakistani delegation was received by Punjab Minister for Excise and Taxation Sardool Singh; Amritsar Deputy Commissioner K. D. S. Bhullar; State Transport Secretary A. R. Talwar; Director (Transport Department) Narinderjit Singh, and State Transport Commissioner Iqbal Singh Sidhu.

The News, 14 December 2005

Third round of Indo-Pak dialogue likely next month (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and India hope to start third round of the composite dialogue at the foreign secretary level in the third week of next month in New Delhi. At a time when the Congress government has still not nominated a new minister for external affairs, Pakistan hopes that a moderate new face will emerge so that "the year 2006 could be one of great promises between the two countries." "The dates for this meeting are still being worked out but hopefully it should be sometime in the third week of January. After these talks the two foreign ministers will meet. Both these meetings are expected in New Delhi," diplomatic sources told The News. "Peace, security and Kashmir will form part of the agenda." Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri and Natwar Singh had developed a good equation though their several meetings had seen slow progress in the areas of peace and security and opening up by New Delhi to explore possibilities on Kashmir. Sources in New Delhi say that there are three ministers in the run and it is too early to say who will be the new boss of South Block. These are Finance Minister P Chidambaram, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Commerce Minister Kamal Nath.

The Hindu, 15 December 2005

Pakistan, Iran for early gas pipeline (B Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Iran favour early implementation of the proposed multi-billion gas pipeline, to carry gas from Iran to Pakistan and India. The project opposed by the United States came up for review here on Wednesday at a meeting between the visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki and his Pakistani counterpart, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri. After talks with the Iranian Minister, Mr. Kasuri said officials from Pakistan and India would discuss the project at talks later this week in New Delhi. The standoff between Iran and the European Union (EU) on the nuclear programme pursued by Teheran was the highlight of talks between Mr. Kasuri and Mr. Mottaki. Pakistan reiterated its support for talks between Iran and the EU to resolve the row and said it opposed the use of force against its neighbour.

The News, 15 December 2005

IPI gas pipeline talks tomorrow

ISLAMABAD: The third meeting of the India-Pakistan joint working group on the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project is starting on Friday here, a government official told Online on Wednesday. He said Petroleum and Natural Resources Secretary Ahmad Waqar would leave for New Delhi on Thursday along with a three-member delegation, comprising managing-director of the Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL), the deputy secretary development and the technical director Inter-State Gas Pipeline Limited (ISGPL). The official said the meeting would discuss the gas reserve certification and allocation; gas quantity and build-up; gas quality, system configuration and the project structure. Other matters of pipeline routing, delivery points, transportation tariff, transit fee, capital and operation costs and pipeline security would also be discussed in the meeting, he said.

Hindustan Times, 16 December 2005

India, Pak open five crossing points following earthquake

NEW DELHI: India and Pakistan opened five crossing points along the Line of Control following the October 8 temblor to facilitate movement of relief material and people on either side, the Indian Parliament was told on Thursday. Following the earthquake, the two countries opened crossing points at Nauseri-Tithwal (checkpost-Tithwal), Chakoti-Uri (checkpost-Kaman), Hajipir-Uri (checkpost-Silikot), Rawalakot-Poonch (checkpost-Chakan da Bagh), and Tattapani-Mendhar (checkpost-Balnoi). It has been agreed with Pakistan that with prior information and depending on feasibility, relief items can be sent in either direction and handed over to local authorities on these crossing points, Minister of State for External Affairs, E Ahmed said in a written reply.

Tribune, 16 December 2005

Karvan-e-Aman with 26 passengers crosses LoC

SRINAGAR: Twenty-six passengers aboard the Karavan-e-Aman or peace bus between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad crossed Kamaan Bridge today, first time after the October 8 earthquake. There were no passengers on board the peace bus on its last run from here to the Kamaan bridge two weeks ago. Those who crossed over to PoK from here today were six passengers, including five returning to the other side after stay in

the valley and one new passenger, official sources confirmed here. Twenty others crossed over to this side of the LoC from PoK today. They included 16 returnees and four fresh passengers. The Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service was suspended following heavy damage to the 18 km-long stretch of road between Uri and Kamaan bridge due to October 8 earthquake.

The News, 16 December 2005

Khokhrapar rail link accord signing on 22nd (Muhammad Khalid)

MIRPURKHAS: Pakistan and India will formally sign an agreement to effect restoration of the Khokhrapar-Munabao train link during a ministerial level meeting in New Delhi on December 22, sources said. The sources, who attended a meeting of top railway officials from both sides at the Zero point on the Khokhrapar-Munabao train route on Thursday, told The News technical issues and timeframe of the train link was discussed in a very congenial atmosphere and there was no disagreement on any of the agenda items. "Important and even some basic technical issues on the Khokhrapar-Munabao train service were discussed in a very congenial atmosphere in which there was no disagreement even on a single issue," said a sources.

The Indian Express, 17 December 2005

Cabinet green signal for bus to Lahore

NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet has cleared the way for an agreement with Pakistan for starting a bus service between Amritsar and Nankana Sahib and a trial run for the Amritsar-Lahore bus sometime this month. A Standing Committee will be set up once an agreement is signed. Parliamentary Affairs Minister P R Dasmunsi said the pact aims at expanding economic cooperation and facilitating people-to-people contact between the two countries. A trial run for the Amritsar-Lahore bus had been scheduled for October but had to be put off following the October 8 earthquake that rocked Jammu and Kashmir.

Hindustan Times, 17 December 2005

India, Pakistan discuss tri-nation pipeline project

NEW DELHI: India and Pakistan on Friday began discussing brass tacks of the 7 billion dollar Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline in order to evolve a project structure for its implementation and operation. Pakistan is expected to give its views on the project structure suggested by India, at the third meeting of the Indo-Pak Joint Working Group on the pipeline that began in the capital on Friday morning. "There will be discussions on the subject with a view to finalise the project structure," an official said. The Indian side is being led by Petroleum Secretary SC Tripathi and his Pakistani counterpart Ahmad Waqar is representing Islamabad. Mukhtar Ahmed, Energy Advisor to Pakistan Prime Minister, is also participating in the meeting. Islamabad will also make clear, its stand on participation of Indian companies in the project and present its views on draft Framework Agreement suggested by Indian side in October.

Daily Times, 17 December 2005

Third India-Pakistan meeting on IPI gasline begins: India gives Pakistan drafted agreement (Iftikhar Gilani)

NEW DELHI: The third round of the Indo-Pakistan Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting on the proposed multi-billion dollar Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline began on Friday, with both countries focusing on the project structure. Sources said that various dimensions of the project and the future framework of talks were discussed during the first day of talks. Before formal meeting of both delegations, the oil secretaries held one-on-one meeting for more than an hour. Sources said that India had handed over a draft agreement on the project structure, which was being deliberated. The nine-member Pakistani delegation, headed by Petroleum Secretary Ahmad Waqar, includes Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's oil adviser Mukhtar Ahmed, Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Ltd Managing Director Rasheed Lone, the Planning and Development deputy secretary and technical director of the Inter State Gas Pipeline Ltd. The 13-member Indian delegation is led by Petroleum Secretary SC Tripathi. He is being assisted by Talmeez Ahmed, an additional secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, now on deputation to exclusively deal with the pipeline related issues.

The Nation, 17 December 2005

India likely to get MFN status soon (Shaiq Hussain)

ISLAMABAD: After a lull of months Pakistan's economic managers have restarted discussion on the most favoured nation (MFN) status for India with officials here saying New Delhi is most likely to get this status in near future "The economic managers are now more than inclined to extend the MFN status to India and this opinion is based on thinking that once SAFTA comes into force, India would automatically get all the trade advantages linked with the MFN position," said an official here. "Those strongly in favour of MFN status for India in Pakistan's ruling circles held the view that the country must move to trade with New Delhi based on MNF status before the South Asian Free Trade Agreement comes into force," he added.

The Nation, 17 December 2005

Pak to appoint consultant on IPI gasline

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will appoint a consultant to suggest a project structure and legal and financial arrangements for the over seven billion dollar Iran- Pakistan-India pipeline within the next two weeks said Petroleum Secretary Ahmad Waqar Friday. He said after the first round meeting of Indo-Pak Joint Working Group on the pipeline that "We will be appointing the consultant in the next two weeks. The process is on", Press Trust of India reported. He said Pakistan was evaluating the project structure suggested by India.

The Hindu, 18 December 2005

India, Pakistan agree on gas pipeline project (Amit Baruah)

NEW DELHI: India and Pakistan agreed on Saturday to give a final shape to the project structure and framework of the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline by April 2006, a joint statement issued after two days of talks said. A tripartite meeting of three Joint (IPI) Working Groups "may be held" early next year in Teheran to discuss issues such as an integrated feasibility study, project structure and a tripartite framework agreement. It was decided to form a technical sub-group that would meet "at least once a month" to discuss issues such as the quantum of gas, pipeline route, transportation tariff and system configuration. The issue of transit fees would be tackled as per the best international practices. There had been an exchange of views on this, the release said.

The Indian Express, 18 December 2005

Track III to Pakistan is ready for the first train

MUNABAO: For close to 40 years, Munabao's only connection with the rest of the world was a slow train to Jodhpur. Now, the last railway station on India's western border is set for a place on the world map. Come December 31, and Munabao will be set to receive the first train from Khokrapar in Sindh with a station inspired-appropriately enough-by Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport. The Munabao-Khokrapar railway link will be the first of the India-Pakistan confidence-building measures to get off the ground following the December 2004 talks between the two countries. Both sides inspected the arrangements a few days ago and will meet next week to work out the details.

Dawn, 18 December 2005

Work on pipeline to begin in mid-2007: Next meeting in February

NEW DELHI: India and Pakistan on Saturday agreed to begin construction of over \$7 billion Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline by mid-2007 despite objections from the United States, according to top officials from both countries. "We have made significant progress. We hope to complete the project by 2,010," Pakistan Petroleum Secretary Ahmad Waqar told media people on Saturday after bilateral talks with officials from India's oil ministry in New Delhi. The proposal to build the pipeline has been on the drawing board for years but uneasy relations between Pakistan and India prevented any progress. Indian officials are also concerned that the project will take gas across volatile areas of Pakistan where other pipelines have been attacked in recent past.

The News, 19 December 2005

Article in Pakistani daily shakes Indian bureaucracy (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: In an unusual development in the Volcker report where at least the former Indian external minister Natwar Singh has been compelled to say goodbye to politics, a story published by Jang on January 24, 2004 has shaken the Indian bureaucracy. The Indian media has gone to town about the contents of the Jang story, which was quoted in a letter the then Indian ambassador in Baghdad wrote in January 2004 just two months before the general elections and over a year before the Volcker report rocked the country. Through this letter, the ambassador informed Delhi that an Iraqi newspaper had mentioned the Congress as one of the many entities that got monetary benefits from the oil-for-food programme.

Dawn, 21 December 2005

Talks on joint survey of Sir Creek begin

NEW DELHI: The Pak-India Technical Experts meeting for the joint survey of the Sir Creek - one of the eight areas covered by Composite Dialogue Process - began on Tuesday here. Surveyor-General of Pakistan Maj-Gen Jamilur Rahman Afridi heads the 12-member team representing Islamabad while Brig Girish Kumar, Deputy Surveyor-General of India, leads the New Delhi side. Pakistan's Deputy High Commissioner to India Munawar Saeed and Naval Advisor at the Pakistan High Commission Capt Mateenur Rehman are also attending the talks.

Daily Times, 21 December 2005

All routes being considered for trade with Pakistan: Indian minister

NEW DELHI: Indian Commerce Minister Kamal Nath told the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that all routes, including sea routes from Kandla and Mundra seaports in Gujarat, would be considered for increasing trade with Pakistan. He was responding to a query put by Gujarat MP Pushpdan S Gadhavi on promoting Kandla and Mundra ports during question hour. Kamal Nath said the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) would come into force

from January 1, which would enable the opening up of all routes that promoted trade. Kamal Nath also disclosed, in reply to a question by Rayapati Samabasiva Rao, that he had spoken to his Pakistan counterpart to expedite the date for a meeting of the India-Pakistan joint study group for economic relations. No date had yet been received, he said.

The News, 22 December 2005

Composite dialogue to resume on 17 Jan (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: The foreign secretaries of Pakistan and India will meet in New Delhi on January 17-18 to initiate the third round of the composite dialogue between the two countries. Foreign Secretary Riaz Muhammad Khan will head Pakistan's delegation and hold two-day talks with Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran. While it is too early to speculate about the members of Pakistan's delegation, Director-General South Asia Syed Ibne Abbas is expected to accompany Khan. Abbas deserves full praise for his negotiation skills and was behind the success of the last round of Indo-Pak talks in Islamabad, leading to the opening of five points at the Line of Control. No official announcement about the third round of the composite dialogue has been made yet in Islamabad or New Delhi, but diplomatic sources in New Delhi has told The News, "Pakistan suggested these dates to India and they have accepted [the suggestion]."

The Tribune, 22 December 2005

Sir Creek talks: Pakistan puts a roadblock

NEW DELHI: India-Pakistan relations were yet again marked by two-steps-forward-two-steps-backward syndrome today as Islamabad took hard positions on Sir Creek and Munabao-Khokhrapar rail service which are at variance with New Delhi's stand. Islamabad broadened the Sir Creek issue by coming with a new position that the Joint Survey of the 96 km estuary between Gujarat and Sind be undertaken along with the demarcation of the international maritime boundary. This proposal came up on the second and last day of the technical-level talks on Sir Creek issue today. Pakistan did not agree to the Indian stand that the Sir Creek issue be resolved first and then the question of settling the international maritime boundary should be taken up. The "second step backwards" has come up through the diplomatic channels on Munabao-Khokhrapar train service, which was tentatively scheduled to start from January 1, 2006. The new position taken up by Islamabad makes it highly unlikely that the second rail link between India and Pakistan could start in the month of January in the first place.

The Tribune, 22 December 2005

Amritsar-Lahore bus from 20 Jan

NEW DELHI: Taking yet another step to enhance people-to-people contact, India and Pakistan today decided to launch the long-awaited Amritsar-Lahore bus service from January 20 and Amritsar-Nankana Sahib bus link by February 27. The agreements on launching the bus services were signed in Lahore today after the third round of two-day technical-level talks. The Amritsar-Lahore service will be operational once a week with the Pakistani side running the inaugural bus from Lahore to Amritsar on January 20, said a joint statement issued after the talks in Lahore and here simultaneously. The agreement to launch the service was finalised at the second round of technical-level talks held in New Delhi in September.

Daily Times, 22 December 2005

'India and Pakistan must find new solution to Kashmir' (Umer Farooq)

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a seminar on the possible solutions to the Kashmir conflict on Wednesday said that militancy was no longer an option in the ongoing freedom movement. They said that parliament should be consulted on the proposals made for the solution of Kashmir dispute and the government should get approval of political parties before presenting any offer to India. The seminar was arranged by the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT). PPP MNA Sherry Rehman said that parliament and civil society should be consulted on policies made on Kashmir. She said that parliamentary committees were the legitimate forums for consultation and for achieving consensus on the issue. "The government continues to bypass the representative institutions." She said the PPP had rejected military solution of Kashmir and Benazir Bhutto as prime minister had also rejected the Kargil operation. She said that the UN resolutions remain important and should not be taken lightly. However, at the same time there is a need for creative solutions in consultation with all stakeholders, including India and the Kashmiris, she said.

Daily Times, 22 December 2005

'Pakistan mum on US-India N-ties' (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran said here on Wednesday that Pakistan had not brought up the July 18, 2005 Indo-US nuclear cooperation agreement under discussion with India at any level. Asked after an address on US-India relations at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, if, given the consternation with which the July 18 agreement between India and the United States was viewed in Pakistan, Islamabad had raised the issue at any level with India, Saran replied, "Never in my knowledge." Asked about the Iran-Pakistan-

India gas pipeline, the foreign secretary answered that energy security is a major Indian concern, as it is Pakistan's. He added that India would look at the project from the viewpoint of its economic viability.

Tribune, 23 December 2005

Experts rule out military solution to Kashmir issue

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has realised that military solution to the Kashmir issue was not possible in the post-9/11 scenario, a meet here was told. Any solution to the issue, which is not acceptable to Pakistan, India and Kashmiris, would not be viable, Lieut-Gen Talat Masud (ret'd), also former Defence Secretary, told the briefing on Kashmir organised by Pakistan's Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency yesterday. Referring to many Pakistani proposals like demilitarisation and self-governance, he said some progress was possible if Islamabad came up with detailed options but for that there was a need to consult all Pakistani stakeholders. Sherry Rehman, member of the National Assembly and head of policy planning wing of the opposition Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), said her party had always rejected military solutions.

Daily Times, 23 December 2005

India's turn to be flexible: Kasuri

ISLAMABAD: It is now up to India to respond to Pakistan's flexibility in trying to reach a solution to the Kashmir dispute, Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri said on Thursday. "Flexibility should be on both sides. The time has come that both countries should make significant progress on the Kashmir issue otherwise the morale of Kashmiris supporting the peace process will come down," Kasuri said. "We will not accept the status quo. Durable peace in the region cannot be guaranteed unless the core issue of Kashmir is resolved," said the foreign minister. The confidence-building measures taken by India and Pakistan over the last two years have led to improving bilateral relations and had a positive effect on the region's economy, he said.

The News, 23 December 2005

Pakistan offers India two transit fee formulae (Khalid Mustafa)

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad has offered two formulae to New Delhi for determining the annual transit fee to be collected by Pakistan from India for gas pipeline that would pass through its territory under the proposed \$7.2 billion Iran-India-Pakistan (IPI) gas pipeline. "We have offered two formulae - one based on distance and other based on volume of gas - during the technical parleys between the two countries at the level of Joint Working Group held in New Delhi on December 16-17," a senior government official told The News. During the talks, New Delhi offered under the volume-based formula five per cent of the total gas to be imported by India through IPI pipeline to Pakistan as transit fee but Pakistan refused to accept the Indian proposal stress for transit fee in cash. India did not agree to it, however, it showed willingness to give transit fee in cash if the formula based on distance is applied.

The News, 23 December 2005

No MFN status for India until Kashmir solution: Kasuri (Asim Yasin)

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri on Thursday said Pakistan would not grant 'Most-Favoured Nation' status to India till the resolution of Kashmir issue. "We have shown flexibility and now it is India's turn to show flexibility on the issue of Kashmir. We will not accept present status quo on the issue," he said while talking to newsmen here at parliament house at a luncheon hosted by PML secretary general and Chairman Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs Senator Mushahid Hussain in honour of the visiting parliamentary delegation from Bangladesh. Kasuri said India has granted MFN status to Pakistan but Islamabad will grant the same till Kashmir resolution. "Despite having a status of Most Favoured Nation from India, the trade balance is still in India's favour." He said third round of composite dialogue between Pakistan and India would be started in New Delhi next month. "We hope that it will give positive results as compared to second round of composite dialogue," he said.

The News, 23 December 2005

Licences under process for Pak banks to open branches in India

KARACHI: Dr. Rakesh Mohan, Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India said on Thursday that the permission to grant licence to two commercial banks of Pakistan was "in normal process of approval and it would be accorded in due course. Talking to journalists at Resource Centre of State Bank of Pakistan after his presentation on Financial Sector reforms in India he said the decision to allow two Pakistani banks to open their branches in India and similarly two Indian banks to open their two branches in Pakistan was announced by both the central banks in November 2005. When asked about the expected mode of payment and system of clearing of banking transactions between the two countries he ruled out (Pakistani) Rupee to (Indian) Rupee transactions and said it was hot topic in the past but at present it was not an issue. He confirmed that there has been no discussion on the subject during the process of negotiation on two-way trade of banking facilities.

Hindustan Times, 24 December 2005

Fissures in the Indo-Pak pipeline

The third Indo-Pak JWG perhaps realised that it was time to step on the gas. The nuclear-armed neighbours agreed in-principle on Saturday to begin construction of the over \$7 billion Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline by mid 2007 so that the first gas flows by the end of 2010. However, there seems to be an "aggressive edge to the way India and Pakistan have announced their decision... despite a ban on the level of investments in Iran enforced by the US Congress," according to the leading Pakistan paper Daily Times. Listing out the reasons the editorial says, "India's fears about Pakistan's 'trustworthiness' and the pipeline's safety in Khuzdar, Balochistan not long ago seems to have evaporated". The paper very clearly brings out the contradiction here saying that Pakistan is yet to gain control over the Balochistan region, especially the Mengal-dominated Khuzdar territory through which the Iranian pipeline will pass. Balochistan, a province rich in natural gas reserves, has been rocked by violence for most of this year. Tribal groups there have been demanding more political autonomy and a greater share of the area's resources.

Tribune, 24 December 2005

Kasuri hopeful of third round of Indo-Pak talks

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmud Kasuri on Thursday expressed the hope that the third round of Pakistan-India dialogue, to be held in New Delhi in January 2006, would take the process of normalisation forward and bring about a breakthrough on the core issue of Kashmir. He admitted that progress in the dialogue had been dismal as far as Kashmir was concerned. However, he said, both countries seriously felt that they needed to go a bit faster. Responding to a question, he said though India had given most favoured nation (MFN) status to Pakistan, the latter would wait for reciprocal action till the joint tariff committee took a positive decision with regard to the higher Indian tariffs to provide for a level-playing field to both countries. About the opening of five points on the Line of Control, he said though the confidence-building measures were not according to the expectations of Pakistan, the plying of the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus and other steps were positive development towards normalisation.

Daily News, 25 December 2005

Pakistani, Indian peace caravans march to border

KHOKHROPAR: Hundreds of people, including women, representatives of NGOs, journalists, doctors, advocates, retired judges and notables, from different parts of the country took a peace caravan to the Pakistan-India Khokhrapar-Monabao border on Friday evening. The caravan was organized under banner of the Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPFPD). Another peace caravan from the Indian side also came to the border. The Pakistani peace caravan, led by Anis Haroon, chief of the PIPFD, left Mirpurkhas in the morning. Shahid Fayaz, general secretary of the PIPFD's Sindh chapter, Rais Ahmad Khan, Imtiaz Ali Phanwar from the Mirpurkhas chapter of the organization and others carrying banners, placards and Pakistani flags and travelling in buses and coaches arrived in Umerkot town where Umerkot district nazim Faqeer Maghan Mangrio and hundreds of people of the town welcomed the caravan.

Tribune, 26 December 2005

Pak seeks parity with India, moves IAEA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has sought the support of the UN nuclear watchdog IAEA in its quest for being treated at par with India by the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), which controls developing countries' access to nuclear technology. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was aware of Pakistan's needs for nuclear technology to meet its growing demand for energy, local daily 'Dawn' today quoted "informed sources" as saying. It claimed that IAEA believes that Pakistan's requirements of nuclear technology should be met to help it generate more electricity and eliminate widespread salinity and water-logging. Pakistan has informed the IAEA it has launched a Rs 178 million programme to reclaim 25,000 acres of waterlogged and saline land across the country. "But this programme needs nuclear technology from the United States and other members of NSG," a source was quoted as saying by the daily, adding that the country would also be needing 8,800 MW of electricity by 2030.

Dawn, 26 December 2005

India says proposal under discussion: Self-governance in Kashmir (Jawed Naqvi)

NEW DELHI: Indian and Pakistani diplomats are discussing the idea of self-governance for divided Kashmir as proposed by President Gen Pervez Musharraf, a top Indian official disclosed on Saturday. Indian National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan told a private TV channel that the discussions were being held in the back channels by senior Indian diplomats and their Pakistani counterparts. Once the ideas on the delicate issue were refined thoroughly these could become part of the composite dialogue process for a more formal discussion and a possible decision, he indicated. "We have a back channel. We have experienced diplomats as part of it and if they (Pakistan) come forward and give specifics about self-governance, then we can probably look at it," Mr Narayanan said.

The Hindu, 27 December 2005

India, Pakistan composite dialogue to be held on January 17, 18 (B Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan announced on Monday that the third round of the composite dialogue with India at the Foreign Secretary-level would be held in New Delhi on January 17 and 18. Foreign Office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam said at the weekly news briefing that the Foreign Secretaries would discuss the Kashmir issue and security-related confidence-building measures (CBMs). Pakistan Foreign Secretary Riaz Mohammad Khan would lead the delegation. To a question, Ms. Aslam said Pakistan had initiated a dialogue with India on the proposals pertaining to "self-governance and demilitarisation" on both sides of Kashmir.

Times Of India, 27 December 2005

'India, Pak discussing Kashmir self-rule'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and India are discussing a proposal to demilitarise Kashmir and introduce self-governance in the region whose ownership is disputed by the two countries, an official said here on Monday. "The proposal was originally moved by President Pervez Musharraf and later this proposal was widely discussed and hailed by Kashmiri leaders," foreign office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam told a press briefing. Aslam said Pakistan backed the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions to resolve the Kashmir issue in keeping with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. The discussion of the proposal on Kashmir could be an interim relief measure for Kashmiris, she said. Referring to the Kashmir issue, she said: "We are dealing with a complex issue and expectations are high to move quickly but it is unfortunate that this is not happening due to misunderstandings."

Dawn, 27 December 2005

New India-Pakistan train set to unite broken bonds

MUNABAO: India and Pakistan are putting the finishing touches to a new rail link between the two countries, 40 years after train services were stopped in the wake of the 1965 war. The passenger train, connecting Munabao in India's western desert state of Rajasthan and Khokrapar, a border village in Sindh, is expected to run again from next month as the two countries open another transport link as part of a slow peace process. At Munabao, a small town known mainly as the last stop for the train to Pakistan, India has built a gleaming new station and workers are rushing to spruce up the terminal for the inauguration. A date for the launch is yet to be set, but Indian officials said they would be ready to start the service by Jan 1. Locals are elated over the prospect of being able to meet friends and relatives separated from them after partition.

Daily Times, 27 December 2005

Indian co to export sugar to Pakistan at \$380/ton

NEW DELHI: An Indian company has sold around 14,000 metric tons of white sugar to Pakistan at \$380 per ton, a senior industry official said Monday. "Deliveries have to be made by end of next month," said the official who didn't wish to be named. To date, this is the single largest export order for any Indian trader or miller to sell sugar to Pakistan after it lifted a four-year ban on Indian sugar imports in August to combat spiraling domestic prices. Trade ties between India and Pakistan have improved following recent peace talks. The official said sugar will be delivered at the land border in Attari, in the northern state of Punjab. "We will require five or six rail rakes to make deliveries," the official added.

Daily Times, 27 December 2005

Arms sales to Pakistan, India in 2006: Rivalry could put US 'on the hook'

WASHINGTON: The Bush administration is manoeuvring to balance possible big new US arms sales to archrivals India and Pakistan in the New Year. In the past week, US Vice President Dick Cheney and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld have made separate visits, not announced in advance, to Pakistan, a key ally in the US-led war on terrorism. If their rivalry flared anew, the United States could be on the hook to deliver sophisticated weaponry to a region on the brink of war, said Matt Schroeder of the Federation of American Scientists' arms sales monitoring project. Islamabad will make up its mind in the coming year on a US offer to resume F-16 fighter aircraft sales after a 16-year break, Foreign Minister Khursheed Kasuri was quoted by the Associated Press of Pakistan as saying after Cheney left. Earlier this month, Air Force Lt Gen Jeffrey Kohler, head of the Pentagon's Defence Security Cooperation Agency, said he expected Pakistan to modify buying plans because of the October 8 earthquake.

The News, 27 December 2005

MFN status to India linked with Kashmir: Humayun

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday linked the extension of (most favoured nation) MFN status to India with the progress on political issues particularly on long-standing and thorny issue of Kashmir. "We are in process of composite dialogue with India on both trade and political issues, but Pakistan will not give the MFN status to India unless a visible progress is made on political issues between the two countries including Kashmir issue," Commerce Minister Humayun Akhtar Khan stated this in post WTO ministerial meeting press briefing. The

minister said that despite the no MFN status to New Dehli by Islamabad, the trade between the two countries is in favour of India just because of Pakistan's liberalised tariff regime.

The Hindu, 28 December 2005

Seven Pakistan nationals repatriated (Shujaat Bukhari)

SRINAGAR: For the second time in the last 16 years, the Jammu and Kashmir police handed over seven Pakistani nationals involved in militancy in the State to Pakistan authorities at Wagah on Monday. A few months ago 12 Pakistani nationals were handed over to Pak. Rangers in a similar manner. According to Additional Director-General of Police (CID) Khuldip Khuda all the seven were involved in militancy-related and anti-India activities and were in different jails for over eight years. "They completed their sentence and after the Pakistan authorities completed consular access they were repatriated," he said adding that all the seven were received by Pakistan Rangers at Wagah. Two months ago, the State authorities handed over 12 persons who had completed their sentence. For the first time Pakistan has accepted that those involved in militancy-related activities in Kashmir were their nationals.

The Indian Express, 28 December 2005

Kashmiri Hindus involvement must for peace, says Farooq

JAMMU: No peace process between India and Pakistan can be embarked upon without involving Kashmiri Hindus, stated patron of Jammu and Kashmir National Conference and former Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah here today. He was addressing a gathering of Kashmiri Hindus at a function at Abhinav Theatre to mark the 16th martyrdom anniversary of Pandit Prem Nath Bhat, an advocate who was shot dead by militants in 1989. Dr Farooq Abdullah pleaded that it was high time that the Kashmir Hindu community and Kashmiri Muslims got united, and it was also time for various groups within the Kashmiri Hindus to get united, failing which no solution of their issues and problems could be reached. He called upon Kashmiri Hindus to forget about their wounds and sorrows through which they underwent during the last 15 years following the militancy in the Kashmir Valley. He said that the Kashmiri Hindus could return to the Valley only after forgetting about traumas of the last 15 years. He expressed that he was confident that one day the Kashmiris would make a comeback to the Valley as no place or facility could entice them for their own tattered houses.

The Indian Express, 28 December 2005

Balochistan: India asks Pak to show restraint

NEW DELHI: India today voiced concern at spiralling violence in Pakistan's Balochistan province and advised Islamabad to "exercise restraint". It underlined the need for the Pakistan government to concentrate on addressing the grievances of the people in the region through peaceful discussions. "The government of India has been watching with concern the spiralling violence in Balochistan and heavy military action, including use of helicopter gunships and jet fighters by the government of Pakistan to quell it," MEA spokesperson said responding to a question. "We hope the government of Pakistan will exercise restraint and take recourse to peaceful discussions to address the grievances of the people of Balochistan." According to media reports, the Pakistan Army has launched a massive operation targeting tribesmen in Balochistan, that has led several people being killed. The operations began on December 18. The attacks were launched just two days ahead of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's visit to the region.

Dawn, 28 December 2005

Pakistan rejects statement

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday rejected an Indian statement about the law and order situation in Balochistan and said the Indian comments in this regard were "unwarranted and baseless." Foreign Office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam, reacting to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs statement alleging violence and military action in the province, said India often shows an unacceptable proclivity to interfere in internal affairs of its neighbours. Such a tendency is contrary to efforts aimed at building an environment of trust, peace and stability in South Asia, she said.

Hindustan Times, 28 December 2005

'Gas pipeline project will strengthen Indo-Pak ties'

LUCKNOW: Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed on Tuesday said the proposed India-Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline project would go a long way in strengthening relations between the South Asian neighbours. He also asked the Centre to carry forward the dialogue with Pakistan on the gas pipeline project as the interest of both countries was involved in it. Talking to reporters in Lucknow, he said free trade should be encouraged between the two countries. On Indo-Pak relations, Sayeed said efforts undertaken by the previous NDA and present UPA government to improve relations with Pakistan has yielded results. Observing that there has been a perceptible change in the attitude of Pakistan towards India, he said another round of talks between the two countries should be initiated.

Daily Times, 28 December 2005

India and Iran discuss IPI pipeline today

NEW DELHI: India and Iran will begin a new round of talks on the gas pipeline project through Pakistan today (Wednesday) and New Delhi is still aiming for a deal by next June, said an Indian official on Tuesday. The official said that Iran's Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs Mohammad Hadi Nejad-Hosseini was travelling to New Delhi to take part in the two-day talks that will focus on the price of the gas and transportation charges. "These are the critical issues," he said, asking not to be named. Plans for the seven-billion-dollar pipeline to bring natural gas to fuel-hungry India have sparked sharp opposition from Washington which accuses Iran of seeking nuclear arms and being a state sponsor of terror. But the official said Indian plans to press ahead with what its Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar has called a "world class project" remained on track despite US hostility.

Daily Times, 28 December 2005

SAARC accord on investment issues: Pakistan, India resume talks soon (Fida Hussain)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and India will resume negotiations on the SAARC Agreement on Protection and Promotion of Investment next month as the first major step of establishing the SAARC Arbitration Council has already been taken, a senior government official told the Daily Times on Tuesday. The treaty was originally to be signed at the 13th South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit at Dhaka, the Bangladeshi capital. There were, however, some differences between Pakistan and India, the major nations of the bloc, due to which the treaty finalization was delayed. The official said there was no study so far to know that how much investment would be made in the region by investors of SAARC countries. The agreement would, however, provide a foundation upon which the future course of action would be built, the official said. "At this stage we can say that the prospects for investment in the SAARC region are bright. And the private sector will definitely go in cooperation with one another as the safeguards are there in every country of the region," the official said.

The News, 28 December 2005

India fails to provide data on Baglihar project

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will not be able to submit answers to technical questions about the controversial 450MW Baglihar hydropower project to World Bank-appointed neutral expert Prof Raymond Lafitte by December 31 following a delay in the provision of certain data about the project by India. The neutral expert has, however, extended the deadline to January 31 for the submission of the replies by Pakistan to the technical questions about the project. Earlier, Pakistan had to submit the replies by December 31. According to a well-placed official source, the neutral expert extended the deadline because Pakistan did not receive some technical data from India, which was imperative to prepare replies to certain technical questions. "However, most of the technical data Pakistan has received from India about the project." The neutral expert had convened the last meeting of Pakistan and India in Geneva on October 19-21 and the two countries were given the technical questions about design standards for the hydropower project.

The News, 28 December 2005

FO alert against secret India-Nepal extradition treaty

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office has warned the government that India and Nepal were in the process of finalising a "secret extradition treaty" that might endanger safety of Pakistanis there as agreement would give full power to New Delhi to get hold of any Pakistani national working or visiting Katmandu. When contacted by The News, Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri refused to comment on the subject. Meanwhile, the Foreign Office has proposed to the government that as a "counter step" Pakistan should immediately sign an agreement with Nepal to save its own citizens from being extradited to India from Katmandu. In the light of Foreign Office and Interior Ministry's joint proposal, FO officials confirmed the cabinet has approved signing of an agreement with Nepal in one of recent meeting held with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in the chair. The cabinet was also warned by these two ministries that if the treaty was not signed, no Pakistani would be safe in Nepal as India would have legal authority to get any Pakistani from Nepal in the light of new agreement.

The Hindu, 29 December 2005

India's comments an interference: Pakistan (B Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has said the observations by the Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesman on the law and order situation in Balochistan are "unwarranted and baseless." The Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Wednesday that comments from New Delhi amounted to interference in internal affairs of Pakistan and were contrary to spirit of the dialogue process. The spokesperson alleged that India often showed an unacceptable tendency to interfere in the internal affairs of its neighbours and said it was contrary to efforts aimed at building an environment of trust, peace and stability in South Asia. "The statement is all the more surprising from the spokesman of India, a country that has long tried to suppress the freedom struggle of the Kashmiri people..." the spokesperson said.

Tribune, 29 December 2005

No MFN status to India: Pak

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has once again linked the extension of most favoured nation (MFN) status to India with the progress on political issues, particularly Kashmir. "We are in process of a composite dialogue with India on both trade and political issues, but Pakistan will not give MFN status to India unless visible progress is made on political issues between the two countries including Kashmir issue," Commerce Minister Humayun Akhtar Khan told mediapersons here. The minister, who attended the recent WTO round of talks, said despite the no MFN status to New Delhi by Islamabad, the trade between the two countries was in favour of India because of Pakistan's liberalised tariff regime. However, Pakistan's exports to India are not flourishing despite New Delhi's MFN status to Islamabad. He said the main hurdle in the enhancement of exports to India was its restrictive tariff regime and non-tariff barriers.

Dawn, 29 December 2005

India refrains from reacting to Pakistan's statement

NEW DELHI: A day after expressing concern at Pakistan army's alleged high-handedness in Balochistan, India on Wednesday declined to join issue with Pakistan which has reacted sharply to the comments. "A counter reaction? No. I think I made the point that I had to," India's foreign ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna was quoted by the Press Trust of India (PTI) as saying when he was asked to comment on Islamabad's statement. New Delhi had noted with "concern" the spiralling violence in Balochistan and heavy military action there and asked Pakistan to "exercise restraint". Mr Sarna had asked Pakistan to address the grievances of the people of the region through peaceful discussions.

The Hindu, 30 December 2005

Gas line work will start in 2007: Pakistan (B Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources, Amanullah Khan Jadoon told the Senate on Thursday that the work on Pak-Iran-India gas pipeline (IPI) project is likely to commence during 2007. The Minister said the multi-billion project was being pursued with the Iranians under a Working Group constituted between the Petroleum Ministries of Iran and Pakistan, he said in his reply during question hour. According to him, the Working Group has held four meetings so far and in the last meeting in November, issues from the point of view of seller and buyer were discussed.

Hindustan Times, 30 December 2005

Back channel diplomacy on to resolve Kashmir issue: Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: President Pervez Musharraf on Thursday claimed that India and Pakistan were currently discussing through back channel diplomacy "ideas" like self-governance and demilitarisation to resolve the Kashmir issue and they would be brought to the front channel if concrete progress was made. Confidence building measures have been moving ahead and Pakistan for its part has tried to speed up the process of dispute resolution as well, he said in an interaction with media at the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors at Lahore. Musharraf said the Hurriyat leadership in Jammu and Kashmir supports demilitarisation and self-governance proposals mooted by him as ideas to resolve the Kashmir issue. On the situation in the troubled Balochistan province, where Pakistan army is conducting operations against nationalist rebels who are opposed to its plans to build cantonments and are seeking autonomy, Musharraf said the government would continue to follow the people-focused development.

Dawn, 30 December 2005

Pakistan, India will resist pressure: Iran; Gas pipeline project

NEW DELHI: Iran remains committed to a proposed \$7 billion natural gas pipeline running to India via Pakistan despite objections from the United States, its deputy oil minister said on Thursday. "We will continue to do our best to implement it," Mohammad Hadi Nejad-Hosseinian told a news conference. The pipeline faces opposition from the United States which accuses Iran of seeking nuclear arms, funding anti-Israeli militias and stirring militant attacks on US forces in Iraq. But after talks with officials in New Delhi, Nejad-Hosseinian said: "I don't think Pakistan and India will yield to pressure of the United States. This pipeline will bring peace to the region." India's petroleum secretary, S.C. Tripathi, said more negotiations on the project were needed.

The News, 30 December 2005

Govt to decide fate of Indian channels: PM

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Thursday said decision regarding airing of Indian TV channels will not be made by Pemra and the government alone will decide the fate of these TV channels. Chairing a meeting to review the performance of Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) here at Prime Minister House, Shaukat Aziz said decision regarding fate of Indian channels will be taken after due consideration. He said the government will provide guidelines and other relevant facilities about the operation of local and foreign TV channels operating in Pakistan. The guidelines will be enshrined in the electronic media policy to be announced

soon.

The Hindu, 31 December 2005

"Terrorism an impediment to peace process"

NEW DELHI: Though investigations into Wednesday's armed attack at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore are still continuing, the Government has no information at this point linking terrorist organisations based in Pakistan to the incident, official sources said here Friday. At the same time, the sources expressed concern at the effect the Bangalore incident - and other recent terrorist attacks - might have on the Indian public's attitude towards the peace process with Pakistan. "If we were looking at the discernible trend of violence across the border and of terrorist incidents, then it is clear that a downward pattern has not emerged," the sources said, adding the commitment made by Pakistan "at the highest level" that no part of the territory under its control would be used to launch violence against India "remains to be fulfilled." The sources expressed the hope that the third round of composite dialogue - which will begin when the Pakistani Foreign Secretary meets his Indian counterpart in New Delhi in the third week of January - would lead to further improvement in bilateral relations. "But our point to Pakistan is that the phenomenon of cross-border terrorism hangs like a big question mark over this whole process... If the trend of reduction in cross-border terrorism does not emerge, then the public opinion, which today favours dialogue, will start evaporating. We have to be sensitive to this."

The Hindu, 31 December 2005

Baglihar issue: Pakistan denies media reports

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam has denied media reports that Islamabad had requested the World Bank to extend the deadline for replying to questions posed by the bank's technical experts on Baglihar dam. Ms. Aslam said: "Pakistan has not requested the World Bank to extend the deadline. We have given answers to all queries." The World Bank had extended the one-month deadline on India's request and this was applicable to Pakistan too. The bank had set December 31 as the deadline for both countries to answer, she said.

Times Of India, 31 December 2005

Balochistan comments 'intrigue' Pervez

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has termed as "intriguing" India's comments on the situation in Balochistan province and said the government knew who is funding the armed rebellion in the region. Without naming India, Musharraf told the media at the Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors (CPNE) in Lahore on Thursday that the statement by a "neighbouring country" about the situation in Balochistan was "intriguing." "We know who is financing and supplying weapons," he said. New Delhi had earlier this week noted with "concern" the spiralling violence in Balochistan and heavy military action there and asked Pakistan to "exercise restraint" and address the grievances of the people through peaceful discussions. Terming the comments "unwarranted", Pakistan accused India of interfering in its internal affairs. On the Indo-Pak peace process, the president said there was no doubt that Pakistan-India relations were at their all-time best.

Hindustan Times, 31 December 2005

Pakistan lauds former Indian PM's efforts for peace

KARACHI: Pakistan on Friday praised former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee for initiating peace efforts with Pakistan, saying his retirement from active politics was sad news "He was a simple but matured politician who played a leading role in the peace process between the two countries," Pakistani Information Minister Sheikh Rashid told the agency. "It is sad news. I must say that the peace process has slowed down after Vajpayee," Rashid said.

Tribune, 31 December 2005

Punjab DGP: terrorists still getting training in Pak

CHANDIGARH: Small groups of Punjab terrorists are still getting training in Pakistan even though major training camps for insurgents have closed down there, said the Director-General of Police, Punjab, Mr S.S. Virk, while addressing the customary annual press conference here today. Information in this regard was based on the interrogation of terrorists arrested in the past one year. "The training camps are gone and support for the insurgents has come down," the DGP said. He admitted that small "modules" of terrorists were still active in Punjab and even outside the state.

Dawn, 31 December 2005

Khokhrapar rail talks on Jan 5

NEW DELHI: Pakistan and India will hold two-day-long technical talks here from Jan 5 for the resumption of rail link between Khokhrapar and Munabao. A 10-member Pakistan delegation, headed by Joint Secretary (Railways) Nasir Zaidi, will arrive here on Jan 4 to hold talks with their Indian counterparts. Technical issues, including the

train service's schedule, its date of commencement and fare are expected to be discussed during the meeting, a senior official at the Pakistan High Commission said on Friday.