

The Hindu, 7 April 2005

An unpardonable crime: Pakistan (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 6. Pakistan tonight condemned the attack on the Tourist Reception Centre in Srinagar and said the incident should not deter the launch of the much-awaited bus service. Talking to journalists, the Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, said: "No religion allows violence. We condemn the attack. Targeting innocent citizens is an unpardonable crime." Stopping or postponing the launch of the bus service would be like sitting at home and not stepping into the street for fear of an accident. "It is no solution. I was very upset when I heard the news of the attack but we will not bow down to such cowardly acts." Asked if Pakistan had agreed to resumption of the bus service without "proper homework," Mr. Kasuri said that none could accuse Islamabad of not doing enough for the benefit and welfare of Kashmiris. The bus service was a humanitarian gesture to reunite the divided families and there was no justification for anyone to target people who wanted to use it. "What crime have the passengers committed by wanting to reach out to their loved ones?" he asked.

The Indian Express, 9 April 2005

C in Saarc may end up standing for China (C. Raja Mohan)

NEW DELHI, APRIL 8: As China raises its economic profile in the subcontinent-from Gwadar on the Makran coast of Pakistan to Cox's Bazaar in the south east of Bangladesh, and the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal to Sri Lanka and Maldives in the Indian Ocean-India seems stuck in a policy limbo. India has limited options in dealing with the rising Chinese profile in the subcontinent. The first is to radically revamp New Delhi's trade policy to the neighbours. While China has aligned its foreign economic policy with the strategic imperatives of geography, India remains tight-fisted and plays for small stakes. If India can't find ways to integrate itself with the economies of our neighbours, China will. Don't blame Beijing for Delhi's lack of vision. Second, as China begins to penetrate the physical space of India's neighbourhood through new transport corridors, New Delhi needs to quickly transform its own border infrastructure and strengthen connectivity with the neighbours. Third, India must reconsider its reluctance to work with China in promoting regional economic integration in South Asia and the abutting regions. Instead of avoiding Chinese initiatives in the region, New Delhi should shape them through its own participation. Fourth, the talk of strategic partnership between India and China will remain empty until the two sides agree to talk about their shared neighbourhood. Like with the US, India needs an official framework for discussion of South Asian regional security issues with Beijing. Finally, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would want to find out from Wen why Beijing, so keen on building a strategic partnership with New Delhi, is reluctant to let India into other regional forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the East Asia Summit.

The Indian Express, 9 April 2005

The Wen and the Why (editorial)

Both Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Premier Wen Jiabao will have to navigate some uncharted waters during their upcoming summit. The relationship between India and China has acquired unprecedented momentum in recent months. This new bonhomie is premised on the three factors. Both countries have decided to focus on the mutual benefits of economic interdependence. India is in the fortunate position of being courted by all the major powers at the moment. The Chinese solicitude towards India may also have something to do the growing sense that India is being wooed by the US as a counter to China. And both countries have adopted a largely realistic tone: India has a more realistic assessment of what it can claim on issues like Tibet, while China is trying to project itself as a benign power. Both have given up on the idealism and moralism that are usually enormous diplomatic irritants.

The Hindu, April 2005

UNSC expansion: India rejects contention on vote

United Nations, April 9.: Rejecting the contention that expansion of UN Security Council through a General Assembly vote would lead to dangerous divisions, India has asserted that those giving this argument want to prevent the democratisation of the powerful body. Branding as recipe for inaction the contention that the Council's expansion awaited evolution of total consensus among the 191-member of the General Assembly, India's UN Ambassador Nirupam Sen pointed out that voting was a democratic procedure and provided for in the charter of the world body. Intervening in the debate on UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's reforms proposals yesterday, he firmly rejected the suggestion that there should be no deadline for the consensus building process, emphasising that it would just mean delaying giving representation to developing countries indefinitely.

The Hindu, 9 April 2005

Talks with China on boundary issue tomorrow

New Delhi, April 8: The Indian and Chinese Special Representatives will hold a crucial round of boundary talks here tomorrow to formulate the "political guiding principles" to resolve the issue, prior to Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's parleys with the Indian leadership on Monday. Chinese Executive Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo,

who is also its Special Representative, will hold the fifth round of boundary talks with his Indian counterpart M K Narayanan, also the National Security Advisor. The two Special Representatives are expected to formulate the "political guiding principles" that would enable the two countries to resolve the boundary issue in a mutually acceptable manner. Already, Wen has expressed confidence that the boundary issue could be resolved by the two countries in a mutually acceptable way.

The Hindu, 9 April 2005

India, China to agree on protocol on CBMs (Amit Baruah)

NEW DELHI, APRIL 8. India and China are scheduled to agree on a protocol containing confidence-building measures (CBMs) relating to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) during the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao's visit. His main day of official meetings is on April 11. Briefing presspersons on Mr. Wen's visit, which begins tomorrow in Bangalore, senior officials said that a "considerable amount of work" had been done on the "guiding principles and political parameters" of a boundary settlement between India and China.

The Indian Express, 13 April 2005

Hitting a boundary (editorial)

Building on the earlier initiatives of Rajiv Gandhi and A.B. Vajpayee, the Manmohan Singh government has now codified the elements of a boundary deal with China. Article III underlines the importance of "meaningful and mutually acceptable adjustments to their respective positions". Translation: both sides have to make territorial concessions. The nature of this give and take is identified in Articles IV and VII. Article IV endorses Chinese claim on Aksai Chin in the Western sector by stating that "due consideration" should be given to each other's "strategic and reasonable interests". Aksai Chin is strategic piece of real estate that links two of China's sensitive border provinces, Tibet and Xinjiang. Article VII protects India's claims in Arunachal Pradesh in the eastern sector, by safeguarding the "due interests of their settled populations in the border areas". Senior officials will translate this broad swap of claims on Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh into specifics (Article X). Experts will delineate and demarcate the linear boundary by using geographic principles, modern cartography and joint surveys (Article VI and VIII).

The Indian Express, 13 April 2005

From 'Bhai-Bhai' to 'Buy-Buy' (ARVIND VIRMANI)

Everybody is talking about an India-China Free Trade Agreement(FTA). The discussion reflects a confusion between the need for increasing India-China trade, improving economic ties and the usefulness of an FTA. In WTO parlance, an FTA means zero duties on all goods. Further, an FTA does not include Services, FDI, or the movement of persons - vital issues for India. An ICRIER paper has shown that the highest un-exploited potential of India's trade with any/all countries is with China and that it could be more than doubled. Normalising trade between the two countries, therefore, is highly desirable. To ensure that this potential is realised, India and China must jointly identify barriers to trade and move to remove them. This means putting procedures in place, ensuring transparency and overcoming the information/language barrier. This does not require an FTA. Prime facie, the economic benefits of a bilateral India-China FTA are not obvious. India, until two years ago, had the world's highest non-agricultural tariffs. With the reduction of the peak rate to 15 per cent, we now have rates that may be in the top 1/5th or 1/4th. Tariffs on agricultural goods are much higher, a few as high as 100 per cent. Lowering these rates to zero under an FTA could result in substantial trade diversion and welfare loss. Thus, as long as our tariff rates remain high, the a priori presumption must be that an FTA with any country with lower tariffs is likely to result in economic losses not gains.

The Hindu, 13 April 2005

Future could belong to Asia if India, China work together: Wen

NEW DELHI, APRIL 12. Emphasising that the 21st century could belong to Asia if India and China developed relations and worked together, the Chinese Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, today said that the two countries were not rivals but friendly neighbours. Addressing and interacting with students and the faculty of the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, Mr. Wen walked away with not just applause but also the goodwill of the students charmed with his reconfirmation that the slogan "Hindi-Chini-Bhai-Bhai" still held good. In a speech laced with quotes from Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore, Mr. Wen said he did not agree with the belief that India and China were rivals or competitors. "Some see China and India as competitors. But I disagree. To view India and China as only rivals is not right. China and India are friendly neighbours and can be cooperative partners," Mr. Wen said. With the topic of his speech being a guarded affair till the very end, Mr. Wen spoke out in favour of cooperation in different fields.

The Hindu, 13 April 2005

Wen sets store by China, India, Russia cooperation (Amit Baruah)

Trilateral cooperation between India, China and Russia will help democratise international relations and safeguard world peace, security and stability, the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, told a group of senior journalists today. The three countries shared "identical and similar" views on many issues, Mr. Wen said. "Coordination and cooperation" among them served the interest of peace and stability in the region and the world at large. China, India and Russia were all "influential" countries and China was "positive towards trilateral cooperation," Mr. Wen said. This "cooperation and coordination" was by no means an alliance and not targeted at any other country. Mr. Wen, who left for Beijing later in the day, said that his visit to India had produced "rich results" and that reporters could see "all the smiles" on his face. "A day after the Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, said that China would be happy to see India as a permanent member of the United Nations' Security Council, Mr. Wen preferred to stick to the language contained in Monday's joint statement on the issue. "China reiterates that we attach great importance to the ... role of India in international affairs because India is a very populous and important developing country. We fully understand and support the Indian aspiration to play an even bigger role in international affairs, including in the United Nations," he maintained.

The Indian Express, 14 April 2005

US team talks to BPO

PUNE, APRIL 13: With one of the persons arrested in the \$4,25,000 (Rs 1.83 crore) BPO scam suspected to have worked with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), sources associated with the probe into the case said the Intelligence Bureau and military intelligence were showing keen interest in the ongoing investigations. "They are in touch with Pune police officials," the sources said. However, the police continued to remain tight-lipped about the DRDO link. "It is too premature to comment on it. The investigations are still going on," Pune Police Commissioner D.N. Jadhav told Express. On Monday, the police had submitted before the Court of Judicial Magistrate (First Class) that the investigations had thrown up indications that Stephen Daniel - one of the 16 arrested for fraudulently withdrawing money from the US Citibank accounts - may have worked with the DRDO. Following this, the IB and military intelligence started showing interest in the case, sources said.

The Hindu, 14 April 2005

Fuel enough for dragon and elephant (Siddharth Varadarajan)

A recurring theme in most writings on the emerging international energy scenario is the pressure that rising Chinese and Indian demand for oil and gas is exerting on world prices. Though oil prices have risen and fallen through the better part of the past two decades and cyclical movement still exists, there is little doubt that we are entering a period of a secular upward trend in the price level. The reasons for this are not hard to find. On the supply side, despite the many great discoveries of the past 10 years, most oil majors like Shell and Chevron-Texaco are having difficulty finding fresh reserves to replace those they extract in any given year. And on the demand side, despite the sluggishness still evident in Japan and Western Europe, the rapid economic growth witnessed across most of Asia is leading to a rapid surge in net imports of oil into the region. The 21st century will not be an 'Asian century' unless the two biggest countries in the continent work as partners. And what better place to start than energy, the control of which helped the U.S. establish the previous century as an American one?

The Indian Express, 14 April 2005

India, US ink MoU on military medicine

NEW DELHI: India and the United States here today signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on training and academic cooperation in military medicine, a step which, the Government says, will open up new frontiers in research and education for the armed forces of both countries. The agreement, signed between the Armed Forces Medical Services and the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences of USA, will allow both the countries to share military medical experience, knowledge and facilities. The agreement is likely to encourage research in fields like cancer and malaria. It will also enhance cooperation in providing training to doctors and specialists. The collaboration conceptualizes training and research work in areas like "biological warfare, management of emerging infectious diseases, including AIDS, using wound healing and tissue repair, and clinical trial setups," said Gen Bhardwaj, DG, AFMS.

The Hindu, 14 April 2005

"We do not know what the General wants" (Harish Khare)

"On the table, Pakistan has produced very few proposals on Kashmir. We remain unsure what the General Saheb wants," says the National Security Adviser, M.K. Narayanan, just a few days before the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, is scheduled to arrive in New Delhi for talks with the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. Speaking to The Hindu, Mr. Narayanan pointed out "the Pakistani President has not come out openly to suggest

A, B, C. He keeps talking in broad terms of the wishes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Does he know what the people of Jammu and Kashmir want?" Mr. Narayanan has in recent weeks emerged as a key foreign policy voice and played a crucial role in the just-concluded India-China dialogue. His views reflect the wider optimistic weariness about the Musharraf visit in the Manmohan Singh Government.

The Hindu, 15 April 2005

China confirms backing India on U.N. seat

NEW DELHI: What India said on Monday was confirmed by China on Tuesday. On Monday, the Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, told presspersons that the Chinese side would be happy to see India obtain a berth in the United Nations' Security Council. Since this "support" did not figure explicitly in the joint statement, doubts were raised in sections of the press that India was "over-interpreting" the point made during the talks between Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh and Wen Jiabao. On Tuesday, the official Chinese Xinhua news agency, however, explicitly confirmed what the Foreign Secretary had said the previous day. "Visiting Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said here on Tuesday China supports India's bid for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council ... He [Mr. Wen] said he had conveyed the support to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during their talks here," said the New Delhi-dated Xinhua report.

The Indian Express, 15 April 2005

India, Pakistan can fight terror together

New Delhi, April 15: Ahead of President Pervez Musharraf's visit, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said India and Pakistan can work together in fighting the sources of terrorism in the region making it clear it was their joint responsibility to ensure full security to the passengers of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service. Addressing the Chief Ministers' conference on Internal Security here, he said notwithstanding the recent dastardly attempt to disrupt the bus service by terrorist elements, people of Jammu and Kashmir came out onto the streets as one to welcome this gesture of reconciliation. "I hope the terrorists and extremists in the region have grasped the mood of the people and will not try to disrupt this bus again," Singh said in the backdrop of reported threats by militant groups to disrupt the second bus service to be run next week.

The Hindu, 15 April 2005

India, U.S. sign 'open skies' agreement

NEW DELHI: India and the United States today signed a landmark agreement, permitting any number of airlines to operate any number of flights to any point in each other's territory. The historic agreement was signed by the Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Praful Patel, and the visiting U.S. Transportation Secretary, Norman Y. Mineta, here. "If prior experience is any indicator, this bilateral 'open skies' agreement between India and the U.S. will stimulate new passenger and cargo services, new partnerships, innovation, and lower prices to the benefit of our economies, our businesses and our citizens," Mr. Mineta said.

The Hindu, 16 April 2005

'Soft border' emerges as common vocabulary (Siddharth Varadarajan)

NEW DELHI: In using the words "soft border" on the eve of his visit to India, Pakistan's President, Pervez Musharraf, has, for the first time, hit upon an element of a solution for Kashmir that has also been explicitly endorsed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. General Musharraf told the Reuters news agency in an interview on Thursday that the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus and other proposed routes within Jammu and Kashmir could be "the first step towards converting (the Line of Control) into a soft border". On May 24, 2004, Dr. Singh, in his first interview after being sworn in as Prime Minister, had made the same suggestion. "Short of succession, short of re-drawing boundaries, the Indian establishment can live with anything," he told the columnist Jonathan Power, adding that meanwhile, "we need soft borders - then borders are not so important. People on both sides of the border should be able to move freely."

The Hindu, 17 April 2005

"I have come with a message of peace" (Harish Khare)

NEW DELHI: Calling for a display of "courage and flexibility" on the part of the leadership in India and Pakistan to bring about "a permanent resolution of all disputes, including Kashmir," the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, extended his "hand" to the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. Responding to Dr. Singh's call for enduring solutions to all problems between India and Pakistan, including Jammu and Kashmir, the Pakistani leader told a distinguished gathering at the Ashoka Hotel: "It needs two hands to clap. They say it takes two to tango, we may be too old to tango, but my hand is extended to clap." Earlier in the day, he landed in Jaipur en route to Ajmer to visit the dargah of the Sufi saint, Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti. "We have come here with a message of peace and unity... We have prayed that in times to come, all differences between India and Pakistan are resolved and peace

returns," he told presspersons there. The evening at the Prime Minister's dinner for the visiting President on the first day itself saw the two leaders setting a positive tone for their crucial talks. As the General arrived for talks with the Indian leaders, he seemed too conscious of the "failed" summit at Agra.

The Indian Express, 18 April 2005

Come on, General (K. Subrahmaniyam)

When General Pervez Musharraf expressed his desire to attend the cricket match in India and use that opportunity to interact with Manmohan Singh, he ought to have made his calculations on a set of assumptions which appear to have since been belied by reality. He could not have expected the US to come out with its new strategy for South Asia with its commitment to help India as a major world power in the 21st century. Implied in that declaration is a commitment not to allow India's secular, multicultural and democratic credentials to suffer. Nor could he have expected China to recognise, for the first time, India's global role and its potential as a knowledge power of the future. US and China are the two powers on whose support Pakistan had been calculating for its hardline stand on Kashmir. The stands of these two powers could not have been lost on the separatist Kashmiri groups either. Even as the US administration has promised a limited number of F-16 aircraft to Islamabad it will also be holding him hostage for good conduct until the delivery is over.

The Hindu, 18 April 2005

"Pak will stop missile tests if India too does so"

New Delhi, April 18: Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf today said that Pakistan would stop testing missiles and acquisition of new fighter aircraft if India does so. "Ask your government also. If they agree, I will agree", he told Editors at an interaction here. He was asked why huge amounts of money were being spent on testing missiles and acquiring fighter aircraft -- F-16 and Mirage. "I am surprised, you are asking me this question. Why don't you ask your government?" he shot back at the questioner. When the questioner replied that he was referring to both the countries, Musharraf said: "Now you are saying this. Ask your government also. If they agree. I will agree".

The Hindu, 18 April 2005

India, Pak agree on fresh CBMs

New Delhi, April 18: India and Pakistan today resolved to work together and carry forward the peace process. Reading out the joint statement issued at the conclusion of the three-day visit of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf to India, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said that both leaders agreed that the peace process was "irreversible". With Musharraf standing by his side, Singh said that both sides agreed to continue discussions on Jammu and Kashmir in a "sincere and purposeful manner" to find a final settlement of the issue. Late on Sunday night, Pakistani Foreign Secretary Riaz Ahmed Khan called Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan Shiv Shanker Menon regarding the joint statement. Menon is presently in the capital. Meanwhile, according to reports in Pakistan, Musharraf will also meet Pakistani media in New Delhi separately tomorrow.

The Indian Express, 19 April 2005

156 Pakistan fishermen head for home

AHMEDABAD, APRIL 18: While Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh welcomed General Pervez Musharraf to New Delhi on Sunday, 156 Pakistani fishermen were released on humanitarian grounds in Ahmedabad. Arrested by Coast Guard officials for allegedly fishing in Indian waters, the fishermen, including two minors, thanked the government for their release and departed from Ahmedabad by the Jammu-Tawi Express. "They will be escorted till Wagah border and handed over to Pakistani authorities," said Jamnagar District Superintendent of Police Manoj Shasidhar. "We sincerely thank the Indian government for releasing us and also request Pakistani authorities to release Indian fishermen," said 42-year-old Amiyatullah who was arrested in 2002 along with 52 others.

The Hindu, 19 April 2005

India-Pakistan peace process 'irreversible' (Amit Baruah)

NEW DELHI: In a great leap forward, India and Pakistan underlined on Monday that the peace process between the two countries was "now irreversible." They agreed to open trade across the Line of Control by allowing trucks between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, open the trans-LoC Poonch-Rawalakot route and take steps for the meeting of divided families along the LoC. Condemning the attempts to disrupt the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, pledged in a joint statement that they "would not allow terrorism to impede the peace process." The statement committed the two sides to re-open their consulates in Karachi and Mumbai by the end of 2005, setting in motion the process to implement a decision taken last year. Gen. Musharraf told Pakistani presspersons here that Dr. Singh had agreed to take a

positive view of handing over the Jinnah House in Mumbai to Pakistan.

The Indian Express, 20 April 2005

India to take up UNSC expansion issue with Annan

NEW DELHI, APRIL 19: Reforms in the United Nations and, in particular, the on going debate over UN Security Council expansion will figure prominently when UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan visits India on his way back from Asian-African Summit in Jakarta. Annan is expected to land in New Delhi on April 25. He is slated to meet the Indian leadership and discuss a range of issues including UN reforms. With India pushing for permanent membership of the UN Security Council, officials said the issue of its expansion will be of prime importance to New Delhi. This will be Annan's third visit to India since he took charge. This time he is expected to meet President A.P.J Abdul Kalam, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Leader of Opposition L.K. Advani. Having unveiled his programme for reforms and expansion, officials said, Annan will look to get views of the Indian leadership during his visit.

Hindustan Times, 20 April 2005

Indian forced into Bangladesh and abducted

KOLKATA: An Indian was abducted on Monday by some unidentified men from across the India-Bangladesh border at Malaupara in West Bengal's Nadia district. The incident occurred two days after a BSF Border Security Force Assistant Commandant was killed by the Bangladesh Rifles, BSF sources said on Tuesday that the men forced Asmat Ali Mondal into their territory while he was working in the field near the border early on Monday. A company commander-level flag meeting was held between the BSF and the BDR on Tuesday. It was reported by the BDR that Mr. Mondal was handed over to the Bangladesh Police for his trial in court.

The Hindu, 21 April 2005

"Concern over F-16s for Pakistan"

NEW DELHI: The Government on Wednesday said it was "concerned" and "disappointed" at the proposed supply of F-16 aircraft to Pakistan by the United States, but would not consider it a "diplomatic failure" on the part of India. At the same time, it informed the Rajya Sabha that it was looking into reports of alleged payment of commission on Indian defence deals by a South African arms manufacturer. "We will look into this," the Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, said during question hour. To a question raised by Sushma Swaraj (BJP) on the proposed sale of F-16 aircraft to Pakistan, he said India was concerned as the supply would increase the capability of the Pakistan Air Force and would have to be adequately factored into India's operational plans and modernisation programme. The IAF did not have F-16 aircraft in its inventory.

The Hindu, 21 April 2005

Threat not eliminated: Manmohan

NEW DELHI: The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today said in Parliament that the threat to the peace process (with Pakistan) from extremist forces and terrorist organisations had not been eliminated and that the whole process of serious and sustained dialogue hinged on building an atmosphere of trust and confidence, free from violence and terror. Dr. Singh said while India was committed to peace and friendship with Pakistan, the difficult issues that divided both the nations had bedevilled relations for far too long to hope for an immediate resolution. "We look forward to Pakistan implementing their assurances in letter and spirit," he said in suo motu statement made in both the Houses on the recent visits of the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, and the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao.

Hindustan Times, 21 April 2005

'Tension between India and Bangladesh defused'

Dhaka, April 21: The border tension between India and Bangladesh has been defused following negotiations between the two countries, Bangladesh's foreign minister was on Wednesday quoted as saying. "I believe the tension caused by the unfortunate and regrettable incident at the border has now been defused ... I hope it will not escalate further," Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan was quoted as saying by the United News of Bangladesh (UNB) news agency. He said the Home Ministers of India and Bangladesh and the Directors-General of BDR and BSF had telephonic conversations yesterday when both sides decided to call each other over telephone and take immediate steps to stop recurrence of such incident. "I've asked to show maximum restraint and remain careful to maintain peace and tranquillity along the border," Khan was quoted as telling reporters here.

The Hindu, 25 April 2005

India denies deployment of additional troops (Haroon Habib)

DHAKA: Two more Bangladeshis were allegedly shot dead by India's Border Security Force personnel at

Gopalpur village along the Jadabpur border of Bangladesh on Saturday. Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources said the BSF opened "unprovoked" fire. The BDR protested against the incident and demanded the immediate return of the bodies. Reports suggest that Jahidur Rahman, 24, and Moktar, 20, both villagers, were going to their field around 5 a.m. when the BSF men allegedly fired at them. The BSF jawans reportedly took away the bodies from the Bangladesh territory. The reported killing was highlighted by the Bangladesh media which reported "indiscriminate firing and troops build-up" by India following the April 16 heavy exchange of fire along the Akhaura border, when a BSF officer and a Bangladeshi girl were killed. "The farmers were shot dead by the Border Security Force men after they strayed into no-man's land at Hairharpur on the Jhenidah-Chhabish Paragana border," a Bangladesh Rifles spokesman told journalists.

The Hindu, 25 April 2005

Do not resume arms supplies to Nepal: Left

NEW DELHI: The Left parties have asked the Government not to resume arms supplies to Nepal, as it will appear to justify the King of Nepal's suppression of the elementary democratic rights of the people. "If this report is true, it is a wrong and unjustified step. The Indian Government had correctly decided to stop military supplies after the King of Nepal had suppressed parliamentary democracy and imposed an emergency," said a statement issued on Sunday by the Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The CPI (M) demanded that the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government clarify the situation immediately and there should be "no question" of resuming arms supplies. "The UPA Government must realise that the appreciation and goodwill it earned with its firm stand in defence of democracy and popular government in Nepal will disappear and it will be held responsible for abetting the King's authoritarianism," the statement added.

The Hindu, 25 April 2005

Manmohan calls for horizontal globalisation (Siddharth Varadarajan)

JAKARTA: Leaders from more than a hundred countries in Asia and Africa signed a declaration on the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership at an emotional function in Bandung on Sunday, bringing to a close a week-long process of consultation and discussion aimed at increasing the collective power of the two continents in world affairs. In the meeting, which immediately preceded the signing ceremony, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, said that Asia and Africa should direct their efforts towards the democratisation of global institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. If globalisation tended to mean the forging of closer economic ties with North America and Europe alone, the Prime Minister emphasised that the need of the hour was "horizontal" globalisation.

The Hindu, 25 April 2005

India ready to accept any date for SAARC meet (Siddharth Varadarajan)

JAKARTA: More than two months after India forced a postponement of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation summit in the wake of King Gyanendra's seizure of power in Nepal, the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, has said that New Delhi is prepared to accept any suitable date for the meeting that Bangladesh, as summit host, wishes to propose. Mr. Singh communicated this to the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Morshed Khan, at a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the just-concluded Asian-African summit here on Saturday. The two Ministers also discussed "the entire gamut of bilateral issues," an External Affairs Ministry press statement stated, making no note of the recent incident on the India-Bangladesh border in which a BSF company commander was killed.

The Pioneer, 27 April 2005

Japan wants to see India as stabilising power (Shobori Ganguli)

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi will be here Thursday midnight with an express agenda: Redefine the existing global partnership between India and Japan to give it a "strategic orientation" in the context of Asia's two new regional superpowers, India and China, heralding a "new Asian era". Two, encourage India's participation in the regional economic integration process currently underway in East Asia. These two issues are meant to underscore India's crucial relevance as a "stabilising power" in Asia, in political and economic terms. Although bitter rivals of history, Japan is aware that engagement with China is a regional and global necessity. However, it needs to counterbalance the current frost in Japan-China ties with a conflict-less partner like India.

The Hindu, 27 April 2005

Irritants will be resolved through talks: Dhaka (Haroon Habib)

DHAKA: The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, has hoped to resolve all irritants through discussions, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, Morshed Khan, said here on his return from Jakarta on Monday night. Talking to journalists on his return from the Afro-Asian summit, Mr. Khan, who met Dr. Singh, said there would be discussion

at the Foreign Minister-level on these irritants. Mr. Khan said Dr. Singh was eager to come to Dhaka to attend the 13th SAARC summit. Mr. Khan also quoted the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, as saying that India wanted the summit to be held in Dhaka sooner. On whether the border issue came up during his meeting with Mr. Natwar Singh, Mr. Khan said all bilateral issues were discussed. There was no major issue between Dhaka and New Delhi apart from some irritants which could be settled through mutual discussions and understanding. Mr. Natwar Singh also expressed his sincerity in this regard.

The Hindu, 27 April 2005

India, Russia to sign defence secrecy agreement (Vladimir Radyuhin)

MOSCOW: : India and Russia have reached a broad agreement on an Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) pact to protect their defence secrets. "The text has been drafted and accepted," the Defence Secretary, Ajay Vikram Singh, said on Tuesday. He is leading an inter-agency delegation of the Defence Ministry, the armed forces and research and development officials to discuss some outstanding issues in the agreement. The absence of an IPR accord threatened to become a major irritant in bilateral relations. Last November, Russia's Defence Minister, Sergei Ivanov, accused India of dragging its feet over the pact and warned of stopping transfer of cutting-edge defence technologies unless the agreement was signed early. "Now that we are moving from the buyer-seller relationship to joint development and production of weapon systems, it becomes important to properly protect the high-end defence technologies against any leakage," Mr. Singh told the Indian media.

The Indian Express, 28 April 2005

China, Japan fight over India

Tokyo/new Delhi, April 28: Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi leaves for India on Thursday on a mission that could mark a major shift in Japan's strategy in Asia as China rapidly emerges as a diplomatic and economic superpower. The trip to New Delhi, only weeks after a landmark visit by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, is part of Tokyo's "strategic diplomacy" to cope with the growing clout of China. "China wants to win India over to its side, and so does Japan," said Terumasa Nakanishi, professor of international politics at the University of Kyoto. "The two countries are waging a tug-of-war with strategic diplomacy," Nakanishi said. "Japan is at a major turning point in its diplomacy in Asia. For the first time since the end of World War Two, Japan is now trying to win India over to its side because of China."

The Hindu, 28 April 2005

Question mark over arms for Nepal (Amit Baruah)

NEW DELHI: A question mark hangs over resumption of arms supplies to Nepal after India expressed concern at the re-arrest on Wednesday of the former Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, and the detention of political leaders by the Gyanendra regime. This action is contrary to the "assurances" conveyed to New Delhi. The issue of resuming arms supply occupied centre-stage after King Gyanendra told a television channel on Sunday last, after a meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Jakarta, that India had given "assurances" that the supply would "continue." Dr. Singh said in Jakarta that the King had raised the issue of arms supplies with him and that New Delhi would look at the matter in "the proper perspective."

The Indian Express, 29 April 2005

Delhi, arms will wait for King to get real (Shishir Gupta)

NEW DELHI, APRIL 28: Indian supply of arms to Nepal will not commence till King Gyanendra is seen as taking the first "tangible steps" to relax emergency measures in the kingdom. He is also expected to install some sort of a government as a first step towards restoration of multi-party democracy. It's learnt that the King indicated to the Indian leadership in Jakarta that he would not extend the state of emergency after April 30 across Nepal but confine these measures only to Maoist strongholds. Gyanendra, who returns from his tour of China and Singapore tomorrow, is also expected to cobble together a pro-royalist government under Kirti Nidhi Bishta, vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers.

The Hindu, 29 April 2005

Japan, India need each other: Koizumi (P. S. Suryanarayana)

SINGAPORE: Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has spelt out a broad policy of cooperative relationship with India on the basis of shared values such as democracy and "the convergence of strategic interests. Therefore, Japan and India need each other as a strong, prosperous and dynamic partner." In an interview, in the form of written answers to questions from The Hindu, Mr. Koizumi indicated that his objective was to reinforce the Japan-India ties "with a new, strategic orientation in a new Asian era." Noting that India was now "stridently emerging as a global power" and recognising its essentiality for peace and stability in Asia and beyond, he did not, however, characterise the emerging equation between Tokyo and New Delhi in such definitive terms as a

strategic partnership or bonding.

The Indian Express, 29 April 2005

Don't push for veto powers, urges Annan

NEW DELHI, APRIL 28: Asking India and other countries aspiring for a permanent seat in the Security Council not to press for veto powers, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan today sought to put the issue of the Council's expansion in the context of larger reforms in the United Nations. Rounding off his three-day visit, Annan said countries like India should look to make the UN more representative of the current geo-political realities. "Let's not get too involved with vetoes. Enlargement without veto will itself be a major step forward," he said. Annan was, however, clear that the five permanent members are unlikely to do away with their veto powers. "It would be totally Utopian to believe that..." Annan agreed that India had a legitimate claim for permanent membership, but as the UN Secretary-general he could not have a preference for either of the two options or be seen as favouring any individual country.

The Pioneer, 30 April 2005

India, Japan hope to tackle difficult neighbours (Shobori Ganguli)

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is in Islamabad on Friday and is expected to convey to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, "in diplomatic language," that UN reforms are an urgent need of the hour and that Pakistan's resistance to India's candidature to the Security Council is not really helping matters. With India and Japan working at fever pitch within the G4 framework to hasten the expansion of the UN Security Council, "difficult" neighbours are now being requested not to play spoilers. A senior Japanese Foreign Ministry official here on Friday said, "Prime Minister Koizumi will talk about this (UN reforms) and will ask his Pakistani counterpart to understand the urgent need for UN reforms." Asked specifically whether he would raise the question of Pakistan's resistance to India at the UNSC, the official said, "The matter will be discussed in a diplomatic language."

The Hindu, 30 April 2005

India, Japan to push ahead on UN reforms (Amit Baruah)

NEW DELHI: India and Japan on Friday reiterated their desire to push ahead on U.N. Security Council reforms. In a joint statement after talks between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his counterpart Junichiro Koizumi, both sides stressed the importance of taking a decision on the issue before the September 2005 summit, as recommended by Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The statement said: "They note with satisfaction the ongoing cooperation between India and Japan, including in the G-4 [along with Germany and Brazil] setting, to bring about reform of the U.N. Security Council, by expanding the membership of both permanent and non-permanent categories ... "They reiterate their support for each other's candidature, based on the firmly shared recognition that India and Japan are legitimate candidates for permanent membership in an expanded Security Council..."

The Hindu, 30 April 2005

India and Japan pledge to work as 'partners against proliferation' (Amit Baruah)

NEW DELHI: Setting aside differences on the nuclear issue, India and Japan on Friday pledged to work as "partners against proliferation." Their Prime Ministers agreed to hold annual summits while committing the countries to step up cooperation in the strategic energy sector. In a joint statement and "eight-fold initiative" issued after talks between Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh and Junichiro Koizumi, Japan explicitly supported India's participation in the East Asian Summit scheduled for December in Malaysia. "While expressing their positions on the approaches towards the shared goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, the two Governments affirm that they will seek to promote commonalities and identify areas of convergence for mutual cooperation in a constructive manner, contributing to the advancement of overall bilateral relations," it said.

The Hindu, 30 April 2005

PM accepts invitation to visit Japan

New Delhi, April 30: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday accepted his Japanese counterpart Junichiro Koizumi's invitation to visit that country. Singh accepted the invitation extended by Koizumi during their talks here, a Japanese official told reporters. The dates for the visit will be worked out through diplomatic channels, he said. Singh, who pointed out to Koizumi that he had visited Japan 10 times earlier, was "very appreciative" of Tokyo's help to India when it faced foreign exchange crisis soon after economic reforms were initiated in 1991. Singh was the Finance Minister at that time. He also described as "unforgettable" Japan's help in arranging assistance from IMF and World Bank during that period.