

The Hindu, 1 April 2006

60 tonnes of Russian fuel for Tarapur reactor

WASHINGTON, March 31: Russia will supply 60 tonnes of nuclear fuel for the two reactors at the Tarapur Atomic Power Station, a spokesman for the Russian atomic agency confirmed. "We are supplying up to 60 tonnes of Uranium 235 enriched to up to 3 percent for Tarapur-1 and Tarapur-2 reactors," Sergei Novikov, spokesman for Russia's Rosatom atomic energy agency, told The Hindu. He deemed it necessary to specify the amount following reports that Russia had supplied "about 50 tonnes" of fuel to Tarapur. The spokesman reiterated that the fuel delivery was being made under the safety exception clause of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) guidelines, which otherwise ban nuclear supplies to India. "It is essential to replace the fuel Russia supplied to Tarapur in 2001," Mr. Novikov said. After Russia informed the NSG members of its decision to supply nuclear fuel to India, Washington voiced objections because New Delhi had not yet fulfilled its commitments under the nuclear deal it signed recently with the U.S. Five years ago, the U.S. also opposed fuel supplies by Russia. Russia's decision to send the fuel despite U.S. objections underpins Indo-Russian strategic relationship and testifies to Moscow's strong desire to sustain and expand nuclear energy cooperation with India. Rosatom chief Sergei Kiriyenko will visit India early next month to review progress in the construction of two Russian reactors at Kudankulam, which are to go critical in 2007 and 2008, and discuss further bilateral cooperation.

The Hindustan Times, 1 April 2006

US training for Iranian Navy in India: Saran

WASHINGTON, March 31: India has rejected as "completely misplaced and misleading" reports that it was providing training to Iranian Navy. Visiting Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran has personally pointed this out to a senior US lawmaker at his apprehensions to this effect were "completely misplaced". Saran met House International Relations Committee Ranking Democrat Tom Lantos on Thursday. Saran pointed out to the US lawmaker that reports of an Iranian ship completing a training programme in India were "misleading" as it was on a "courtesy visit". "The concern expressed there was about a ship visit to one of the southern Indian ports and somehow somebody has given the impression that India has engaged in training the Iranian Navy or there were some joint exercises, which is completely misleading," the Foreign Secretary said. "This is one of the several courtesy visits which takes place from countries all over the world. This was an Iranian naval training ship, which made a port call which is a very normal activity. So I pointed out to Mr Lantos that such apprehensions were completely misplaced," Saran added.

The Indian Express, 3 April 2006

Ignore NPT for India: Russia

WASHINGTON, April 2: Recognising India's energy needs, a senior Russian official has called for making an exception for the country in the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to give it access to civilian nuclear technology. We cannot ignore India's energy requirements. It is a rapidly developing country with a good non-proliferation record. We should probably make an exception in this case without adopting new norms that may erode the non-proliferation regime, director of the Foreign Ministry's Security and Disarmament Department, Anatoly Antonov told Pro-Kremlin Vremya Novostei daily. On the non-proliferation aspects of the G-8 policy, Antonov said the NPT is an invaluable element of international security and stability, which the follow-up conference has proved, even though it failed to formulate practical recommendations for strengthening the NPT. However, it has reaffirmed the main point, that the NPT can and must be used to deal with new challenges and threats to the non-proliferation regime, Antonov observed. He said that Iranian and North Korean nuclear programmes remain on the G-8 agenda. We will continue the search for new political and diplomatic approaches to settling this problem. We will use the services of the IAEA to find a mutually acceptable solution on Iran, which would allow Tehran to develop nuclear power engineering and at the same time ensure a purely peaceful dimension of its nuclear programme, he said.

The Indian Express, 4 April 2006

US industry says failure will be disappointing

NEW YORK, April 3: The American industry, which is lobbying hard in Congress for the civilian nuclear agreement with India, has said it will be deeply disappointed if the deal does not go through. Represented by the US Chamber of Commerce, which has over 30 lakh small and big businesses as its members, the American industry has launched a grassroots campaign in large number of Congressional districts to present its views before their elected representatives. The US India Business Council (USIBC), which represents top US companies like Boeing and General Electric, for the first time has hired a professional lobbying firm Patton Boggs to articulate the industry's voice in support of the civilian nuclear deal. With like minded parties, eminent Americans and associations, it has build up a

Coalition for Partnership with India to drum up the support. If this watershed deal does not pass Congressional clearance, the US industry will be disappointed, as will our counterparts in India, USIBC president Ron Somers told The Indian Express. With sudden mounting opposition to the nuke Bill this past week, the industry through the Chamber, USIBC and the Coalition too has intensified its lobbying efforts. The fact that 10 out of the 18 Congressmen who have introduced a legislation against the nuke deal and India are members of the India-Caucus, is considered, among the lobbying firms and diplomatic circles, as a major advantage to the group, which has been opposing the Indo-US civilian nuclear deal.

The Times of India, 5 April 2006

Indo-US nuke deal in Rice cooker

WASHINGTON, April 4: There is no loss of nerve in the Bush administration over resistance to the US-India nuclear agreement from some American law-makers and there remains a commitment at the highest levels of the government to take the deal forward, a senior US administration official said on Monday. Asking that opposition to the deal from senators and Congressmen be seen in perspective in a system where complex forces are at work, the official, who spoke on background, suggested it was premature to pronounce the demise of the deal considering the President's commitment to the building closer ties with India. The official's comments came ahead of back-to-back hearings on Wednesday on the subject by the House International Relations Committee (HIRC) and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) at which Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will testify. Rice, who will be the sole witness before SFRC, is expected to be grilled by the leadership of the 18-member committee which has ten Republicans and eight Democrats. The Republican chairman of the Committee Richard Lugar and the Democratic leader Joseph Biden both have reservations about the deal, as does the Republican chair of the HIRC Henry Hyde. The case Rice makes before them could well determine its fate. President Bush is also expected to begin talking about the benefits of the agreement now that he has returned from Mexico. At some point, perhaps just ahead of the vote, he will be making direct contact with law-makers starting with phone calls. In terms of procedure, following hearings by the SFRC and HIRC, the legislation pertaining to the nuclear deal will be taken for mark-up where its language will be formalized, with amendments if any. The two committees will then vote on whether to send it up to the full House and Senate.

The Hindu, 6 April 2006

Russia proposes to be partner in gas pipeline

NEW DELHI, April 5: Russia is interested in becoming an active partner in the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline that will help India meet its energy needs to a great extent. This was conveyed by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradikov during his visit here, the country's Ambassador to India Vyacheslav I. Trubnikov said at a seminar on "Indo-Russian Relations in a New Global Scenario" here on Tuesday. It was inaugurated by the former Prime Minister, I.K. Gujral. Mr. Trubnikov said the excellent ties between the two countries could help further consolidate cooperation in the nuclear field. Russia had recently supplied 60 tonnes of low enriched uranium for the Tarapur nuclear plant.

The Hindu, 6 April 2006

Rice: we cannot do much on pipeline project

WASHINGTON, April 5: United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Wednesday said the Bush administration could not guarantee that even if the nuclear deal with India got Congressional approval, the Iran-India gas pipeline would not be built. Ms. Rice, who made a presentation before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said that if the amendments to the 1954 Atomic Energy Act go through, the administration cannot give any guarantee that India's reliance on Iranian energy would go away or that the pipeline would not be built. To a query of Senator Lincoln Chaffee, she said: "Well, I can't be assured that it will not. But let me just note that India is, of course, not the only country having an oil and gas relationship with Iran. Some of our closest allies have oil and gas relationship with Iran. Among the Europeans, Italy is Iran's largest trading partner. So, most countries have a different relationship with Iran than we do," Ms. Rice said. "But what we are saying to everyone, and I think it is now gaining resonance, is that Iran is not really a reliable, in the long run, supplier, because of the behaviour of Iran concerning the entire international community about what its intentions are toward a nuclear program, the unreliability of that Iranian oil and gas supply has got to be taken into account. The nature of Iranian policies has got to be taken into account," she said.

The Indian Express, 8 April 2006

Boucher assures no review of N-deal

NEW DELHI, April 7: Amid concerns that the Congress could insert fresh conditions on India in the civil nuclear Bill being debated in Washington, US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Richard Boucher today made it clear that

conditions requiring a renegotiation of the deal would not be accepted by the Administration. Boucher said matters were going full speed ahead and the Bush Administration hoped to get a vote on the deal in Congress in a few months. No conditions will be accepted that require the deal to be renegotiated, he replied to a question on the possibility of new additions to the deal. However, Boucher did try to address the concerns of dissenters of the deal in Washington by once again raising the issue of India defining its minimum credible deterrent. We, and previous Administrations, have pushed for India to further define its minimum credible deterrent and we continue that today, he said during a talk at the II. While he did not raise this today in his consultation with Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, New Delhi's response to this has always been that by minimum credible deterrent it means India makes only as many weapons as are needed to counter the threat it faces and since the threat cannot be specifically defined, it is not possible for it to define its deterrent. Boucher, who commenced his current job just a week before US President George Bush's trip to India in March, felt the Indo-US nuke deal is a good sign of things to come. If we can come to an agreement on civil-nuclear co-operation and we did after struggling with the issue for 30 years we can do anything, he said.

The Hindu, 9 April 2006

Singapore, India may expand economic pact

INGAPORE, April 8: India and Singapore "will look at how to expand the scope and benefits of the CECA [Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement]" that they had signed last year. The upbeat indication, spelt out by Singapore's Trade and Industry Minister Lim Hng Kiang after the CECA review here on April 1, is expected to set the stage for discussions at the "Connecting India" summit on April 12 and 13. The "Asia Pacific Business Summit" on this theme is being organised by the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) as an exclusive event under the "Celebrating India" project of the Indian High Commission here. The Hindu and The Hindu Business Line are the media partners for SICCI summit, while Price Waterhouse Coopers is the organiser's knowledge partner. Union Commerce Minister Kamal Nath, who met Mr. Lim for the CECA review that was carried out several months before the time fixed for this exercise, said, "We must put some more mass in this agreement." Mr. Lim said they had now "set the lines and directions" for exploring the feasibility of CECA expansion and taking this process "forward," preferably before the one-year period is up by August. "As India's first comprehensive economic pact with any country, the CECA came into effect last August after it was signed over a month earlier. Indicating that the CECA expansion would be considered over the next six weeks from now, Mr. Kamal Nath said the discussions would cover the inclusion of more tariff lines for trade in goods and some "amendments" of the existing provisions.

The Times of India, 10 April 2006

Karzai arrives on India visit

NEW DELHI, April 9: President Hamid Karzai arrived here on Sunday on a five-day state visit during which Afghanistan and India will sign three pacts and discuss critical security issues including the resurgence of Taliban violence. Suresh Achouri, the minister of state for parliamentary affairs, received Karzai, who is accompanied by a high power delegation that includes 10 ministers. Karzai will meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Monday and discuss a host of bilateral and regional issues. These will include a spurt in violence in his country that has killed many American soldiers and Afghans, and Pakistan's suspected role in providing refuge to the remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Karzai and his Pakistani counterpart Pervez Musharraf had a spat recently over Islamabad's alleged hand in the Afghan violence. Islamabad denies any hand in the violence. The India-educated Karzai is likely to ask Manmohan Singh for a further expansion of India's already considerable assistance for a slew of developmental projects ranging from the building of roads and power projects to education and small-scale industries in Afghanistan. India has already pledged \$550 million for the reconstruction of that country. Two memorandums of understanding will be signed on Monday, on rural development and educational exchanges. Another pact will be signed on standardisation between the Bureau of Indian Standards and Afghan National Standardisation Authority.

The Hindu, 12 April 2006

India to back U.S. entry into SAARC as observer

NEW DELHI, April 11: India is all set to back the entry of the United States into the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as an observer, senior External Affairs Ministry officials told The Hindu on Tuesday. The issue is likely to figure at a two-day meeting of Foreign Secretaries of the seven SAARC nations that began in Dhaka on Tuesday. SAARC leaders decided, in principle, at their 13th summit meeting in Dhaka in November 2005, that China and Japan be associated as observers. "They [the SAARC leaders] also welcomed and agreed in principle with the desire of the People's Republic of China and Japan to be associated as observers. The Council of Ministers will decide

re modalities in this regard at their 27th meeting in July 2006," the Dhaka Declaration of November 13, 2005, said. "They also acknowledged the renewed interest of other regional and international organisations, bodies and entities to cooperate with SAARC in various collaborative endeavours in accordance with the objectives and priorities of SAARC," the Declaration added. With little prospect of any opposition, it is likely that both China and the U.S., along with Japan, will be accepted as "observers" of the grouping by the time India hosts the 14th SAARC summit in 2007. It may be noted that India has been given observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), a grouping in which China and Russia are key players. SAARC leaders also decided to admit Afghanistan as a full member of the organisation (as distinct from conferring observer status) in Dhaka.

The Hindu, 12 April 2006

India, Pakistan and Afghanistan need to be closer"

NEW DELHI, April 11: Describing his country as "perhaps more South Asian than Central Asian," Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Tuesday said a "tripolar structure of cooperation" among Kabul, New Delhi and Islamabad would bring progress and economic betterment to the region faster than what was possible if each went its own way. "We should not treat this question politically, rather it is a question of all of us as human beings," he told a breakfast meeting with editors here. He was prepared to do anything to realise his vision of closer cooperation among the three neighbours. "We have to start with practical issues and the best way to begin closer cooperation is with transit trade and cultural exchanges," Mr. Karzai suggested. He said Pakistan had shown some flexibility, allowing Afghan overland exports to India. Asked about Pakistan's response to the demand for transit rights for Indian exports, Mr. Karzai expressed the hope that the two countries would not allow the Kashmir problem to come in their way of finding "other areas of cooperation." Mr. Karzai fielded questions on a wide range of issues: from poppy cultivation and his country's relations with Pakistan to the recent controversy surrounding the imposition of death sentence on Abdur Rahman, an Afghan citizen who had converted from Islam to Christianity. Seeking to put behind him his recent bitter exchange of words with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf over Islamabad's handling of the anti-Taliban campaign, Mr. Karzai said he had a very close relationship with him. "We are friends," he said, "and between friends, there are times when frank words are expressed, and that is all right."

The Hindu, 13 April 2006

Politics key to India-China engagement: N. Ram

SINGAPORE, April 12: Proactive politics rather than economic imperatives should be seen as the key to progress in India's buoyant interaction with China. Making out a powerful case for recognising this reality in the context of the evolution of India's relationship with China, N. Ram, Editor-in-Chief, The Hindu said here on Wednesday that the prospects on this bilateral front should not be left to spontaneity. Tracing the various phases in the India-China engagement over half a century, Mr. Ram drew attention to Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in December 1988 as "the breakthrough event" that set the stage for a process of an "extremely inspiring" progress. Addressing the "Asia Pacific Business Summit," organised here by the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Ram emphasised that "normalisation is aided by China's economic reforms." Identifying this aspect as just "one of the key factors" and noting that the breakthrough preceded India's own economic liberalisation, he said "the impulse came from politics, so far as India was concerned" at that time. The conclusion that could be drawn, therefore, would be that "economic strategy and development imperatives are important, but politics must lead." Underlining the resonance of this "hypothesis" for the economics-savvy players on the international stage, like those assembled at the summit.

The Hindu, 16 April 2006

Interpol plan to combat corruption

SINGAPORE, April 15: The Interpol has, for the first time, considered widening its agenda to cover corruption as a priority crime area. Delegates at the Interpol's 19th Asian regional conference that concluded in Jakarta on Thursday proposed inter-state "cooperation and coordination" to combat corruption. The issue will now be discussed at Interpol's executive Committee meeting in May. Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Vijay Shanker, told The Hindu over telephone from Jakarta on Friday that India's proactive role received "the wholehearted support of China" during the latest Interpol session. The delegates proposed that Interpol General Secretariat study the feasibility of creating an Anti-Corruption Academy under the agency. Mr. Vijay Shanker said India told the Interpol that it should create "consensus" on the complex issue of combating corruption. India took the line that any framework of Interpol-level cooperation "has to be [fashioned] within the ambit of the United Nations Convention" on anti-corruption matters. Several provisions of the convention could serve as the guide to inter-state exchange of information. As of now, 120

ountries have signed this convention, while only 36 among them have ratified it. As for the move for an Interpol Anti-Corruption Academy, he brought to the agency's attention that CBI's training academy, with its "state-of-the-art" facilities, could share its expertise. Other subjects at the regional conference included "meaningful" connectivity under I-4/7, Interpol's secure global police communication system, the use of automated search system, passport security, human trafficking, the fight against terrorism and money laundering.

The Times of India, 18 April 2006

Nuclear-test cap: India rejects US rider for deal

NEW DELHI, April 17: India has said that while being firmly committed to a unilateral moratorium on further nuclear testing, it won't accept a US proposal under the bilateral agreement to cap its nuclear testing. The external affairs ministry spokesperson said on Monday that India had already told the United States that this provision in the '123 agreement' currently being negotiated is not acceptable. A draft agreement sent by Washington stipulated that cooperation will be discontinued if India were to detonate a nuclear explosive device. "In preliminary discussions on these elements, India has already conveyed to the US that such a provision has no place in the proposed bilateral agreement and that India is bound only by what is contained in the July 18 Joint Statement, that is, continuing its commitment to a unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing," MEA spokesman Navtej Sarna said. "The US had shared with India some weeks ago a preliminary draft agreement on Indo-US civil nuclear cooperation under Article 123 of the US Atomic Energy Act." The draft agreement marks a shift in Washington's position while negotiating the deal. It will be fodder for the domestic opponents of the deal who maintain that the deal would require India to forgo its right to conduct more nuclear tests. While there is a debate on whether more tests are needed for validating the findings of the Pokhran tests and developing nuclear weapons, the prompt rejection of the US draft is in line with those who have argued for retaining the right to do more tests.

The Hindu, 18 April 2006

Talks on Wullar barrage put off, says Pakistan

ALGARH (WEST MEDINIPUR), April 17: Pakistan on Monday announced the postponement of talks with India on the Wullar barrage/Tulbul navigation project under the composite dialogue process. Foreign Office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam told a weekly news conference that the new schedule for the talks, slated for April 18 and 19 in New Delhi, would be announced shortly. To a question, Ms. Aslam said the timetable for the composite dialogue would not be affected because of the postponement. "The talks will be rescheduled shortly and are not likely to disturb the schedule of other talks." The talks had to be postponed due to pre-occupation of the Indian Water Resources Secretary with other business. India and Pakistan have been engaged in talks to resolve the issue for 18 years. Islamabad says the construction of the barrage by India can block the flow of the Jhelum, adversely affecting the country's agro-based economy. India says the barrage will not hinder water flow into Pakistan and contend that the 20-km navigational route will facilitate navigation between Baramullah and Wullar in Jammu and Kashmir. To a question on the Baglihar project, the spokesperson said the matter was pending before the neutral expert of the World Bank and the next meeting was expected in May. About the recent statement of Afghan President Hamid Karzai on allowing transit trade facility to India via the Wagha land border route, Ms. Aslam said Pakistan had allowed all countries to use the transit route from Karachi.

The Hindu, 19 April 2006

India, Bhutan review bilateral relations

NEW DELHI, April 18: India and Bhutan on Tuesday reviewed their bilateral relations as Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, met King Jigme Singye Wangchuk in Thimpu. The visit "provided the opportunity for in-depth and wide-ranging review of the many facets of our bilateral relations," Saran said. "There are no outstanding issues between us," he said.

The Indian Express, 19 April 2006

We have proof on militant camps, says Duggal

RINAGAR, April 18: In a major shift in the UPA government's conciliatory approach towards Pakistan, Union Home Secretary V K Duggal today said the government had fail-proof and foolproof evidence that militant camps were still flourishing in Pakistan. The gun has to be answered by the gun, he said even as he reiterated the Centre's commitment to the peace process with Pakistan. It (existence of the camps) is a fact. We have the number who have been trained. We know that the recruitments are happening. We know how many are ready to cross (the Line of Control). And we can produce this evidence any time. He said that despite confidence building measures, militant camps were flourishing across the border. This certainly is an issue of concern. But we are ready to meet the challenge, he said. Duggal said Prime

Minister Manmohan Singh's perception was that peace between India and Pakistan had to come through people-to-people contact. When he talks of peace, he thinks of the disappearance of physical borders, like what has happened in Europe. Referring to the recent spurt in violence in the city, Duggal said Srinagar is the nerve centre of not only what is happening here but also the whole of India. We are absolutely determined to maintain peace. Whether it is Varanasi, Delhi or Srinagar, these people will be caught and brought to justice, he added. Duggal, however, acknowledged the general decline in militancy related incidents in the state, if not militancy itself. There has been a considerable reduction in the number of civilian killings in comparison to last year. Besides, we have also neutralised a sizable number of terrorists, he said.

The Hindu, 20 April 2006

India a different proposition: Blair

LONDON, April 19: Prime Minister Tony Blair on Wednesday rejected attempts to draw parallels between India and Iran over the nuclear issue, and said that India was a "very, very different proposition." His remarks came while replying to a question in the House of Commons suggesting that the West was pursuing double standard in pressuring Iran to give up its nuclear programme while India was being offered help by the U.S. with its civilian nuclear programme despite New Delhi's refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Strongly disagreeing with the MP who had asked the question, Mr. Blair said Britain supported the India-US agreement. "India is a very, very different proposition from Iran." To another question, Mr. Blair insisted that there were no plans to attack Iran but warned Teheran that it must desist from going ahead with its controversial nuclear programme. "Nobody is talking about a military invasion against Iran or military action against Iran. We are taking diplomatic action through the U.N. Security Council," he said, when asked by the Liberal Democrat leader Menzies Campbell whether he agreed with the Foreign Secretary Jack Straw that military action was inconceivable. Mr. Blair defended the U.S. position that all options, including a military intervention, were on the table.

The Indian Express, 21 April 2006

Deal the key to Indo-US relations: PM

NEW DELHI, April 20: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has categorically ruled out placing all of India's nuclear reactors under full scope safeguards and reaffirmed commitment on unilateral moratorium without predicting what distance future holds. "No. We would like the world to move toward universal nuclear disarmament," he said in an interview to The Washington Post published today, when asked if India would ever put all its reactors under full scope safeguards. Some critics of the Bush administration have said that the US should have insisted on India placing all its reactors under full scope safeguards for the civilian nuclear energy cooperation between the two countries. The Prime Minister said given the circumstances, India needed a strategic nuclear weapons programme. "In our neighbourhood, China is a nuclear power and on our western frontier there is Pakistan, which developed its weapons through clandestine proliferation." Singh also said that he could not imagine circumstances that would require India to resume its nuclear testing that many in India have said was the country's sovereign right. "Our scientists tell me they need no further tests. As for the distant future, I cannot predict forever, but our commitment is to continue our unilateral moratorium," the Prime Minister said.

The Hindu, 22 April 2006

India's freeze on nuclear testing must hold: U.S.

WASHINGTON, April 21: United States Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher said India voluntarily imposed a moratorium on carrying out nuclear tests and the U.S. expected that position to hold. He, however, made it clear that the Bush administration would not insist on any new commitments in this regard. Replying to reporters' questions on the issue on Thursday, he said: "We all know India has a moratorium on nuclear testing. And it has made a public commitment based on its own decision to continue that moratorium. I think that is very important to us and others who look forward to cooperating with India in the area of civilian nuclear power." Mr. Boucher said: "I think it is important to remember that this is going to be a civilian nuclear deal, which entails India's cooperation on the civilian side. It, in no way, promotes, supports, or encourages further developments on the military side." He also said: "It has long been the U.S. position that all parties in the region need to think about strategic stability. We welcome the discussions the Indians and Pakistanis have had on the subject. We have had our discussion with all parties on strategic stability in the region and we think it is worth pursuing." The Assistant Secretary also said the bilateral deal now under discussions "is a very straightforward process and it is going to be something we have to negotiate, discuss and, of course, we are not going to discuss through the press or public or based on pieces of paper that were leaked." "We look forward to

egotiations with the Indian Government directly," he added. He expressed confidence that the Congress would approve the Indo-U.S. civilian nuclear energy legislation and that it would be done soon. He based his optimism on the fact that Congressmen and Senators are aware of the deal's benefits for energy, the environment and to non-proliferation."

The Hindu, 23 April 2006

'View India as an `economic opportunity'

ISLAMABAD, April 22: Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan Shiv Shankar Menon has said Pakistan's `positive list approach' regarding items which could be imported is the biggest obstacle to India-Pakistan trade relations. Addressing the Farhad Chamber of Commerce in Peshawar on `India-Pakistan Trade and Economic Relations' on Saturday, Mr. Menon made a strong case for Pakistan to view India as an `economic opportunity' that is literally at its doorstep and benefit from the growing Indian economy. "The biggest obstacle to normal direct trade between our two countries is Pakistan's positive list approach to imports from India, when India gives Pakistan Most Favoured Nation (MFN) access to the Indian market. "If SAFTA is implemented as it was intended to be, MFN-plus was the description used by Pakistani Ministers previously, then it would allow us to begin realising the potential of direct trade between our two countries," Mr. Menon told the Chambers. The envoy said India hoped that beginning July 1 all members of SAARC would only have negative lists and that movement restrictions, which go against the very essence of SAFTA, are abolished. "If these conditions are not met, then SAFTA has little operational meaning," he asserted. Mr. Menon said even if Pakistan found it difficult to give India MFN status, it was difficult to understand why Pakistan does not place on the positive list goods that it at present imports from other countries. He said such an arrangement would introduce an element of fair competition that will benefit the Pakistani consumer and importer. The envoy said if SAFTA is implemented in letter and spirit, India and Pakistan could bring back into normal bilateral trade goods that are today traded through third countries. Mr. Menon said that the indirect trade, which is estimated between the two countries at US \$ 2.5 billion, higher transportation costs make many potential Pakistani commodity exports to India uneconomical.

The Hindu, 24 April 2006

'German firms commit big investments'

HANNOVER, April 23: Chief Executive Officers of top German companies met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh here on Sunday even as major investment commitments came from BMW, Volkswagen, Bosch and Siemens. Luxury carmaker BMW alone has committed Rs. 900 crore for setting up a manufacturing facility near Chennai, with Rs. 200 crore coming in the first tranche. Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath told newsmen after the CEOs' meeting that energy major Siemens sought to invest 600 million Euros in setting up a manufacturing facility. The German truck and bus maker has signed up with the Firodias-owned Force Motors for establishing a plant at Pitampura in Madhya Pradesh with a commitment of \$300 million. Mico Bosche would be investing yet another 500 million Euros in setting up units in the field of auto components and information technology. Others who met the Prime Minister included the CEOs of MWG, Hilti AG, Deutsche Bank, Carl Zeiss, Lahmeyer International and Bayer. They told the Prime Minister that Germany was looking at India for making huge investment in manufacturing. Dr. Singh underlined the need for greater, deeper and wider German involvement in India's economy to help it achieve an annual growth rate of 10 per cent. He also sought Berlin's assistance in giving a true meaning and content to the India-European Union strategic partnership. Dr. Singh said the relations between India and the E.U. were bound to strengthen if Germany, the most important member of the regional grouping, supported India's cause. He said he was happy that Germany has chosen India to be the partner country for the Hannover Fair, the largest technology trade exhibition, after 22 years. Some 300 Indian companies would participate in the fair.

The Times of India, 25 April 2006

'We do not recognise India as a nuclear weapon state: US'

NEW DELHI, April 24: Seeking to allay apprehensions that it was shifting goal posts on the Indo-US nuclear deal, the US on Monday said it understands that India will continue to maintain its strategic programme but believed that majority of future growth will be on the civilian side. The US Embassy in a statement also said that Washington believed that India will not join NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state. The Embassy statement came in the wake of reports that Washington was renegeing on the nuclear pact reached last year and on India's plan to separate its military and civilian nuclear facilities. Formed up during the visit of President George W Bush last month. "We do not recognise India as a nuclear weapon state, and do not seek to amend or renegotiate the NPT. We understand, however, that India will not join the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state," it said. It said "we understand that India will continue to maintain its strategic programme, although we believe the majority of future growth will be on the civilian side". The Embassy quoted Secretary of State Condoleezza

ice as noting recently that India was pursuing an economic growth at eight to nine per cent and was going to need an energy supply and diversify to technologies like nuclear energy. She had said that the US cannot begin to share those technologies with India without an agreement of this kind. The statement said the effort by the US to seek an exemption for India from the full-scope safeguards requirement of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) guidelines and amend US laws would, once successful, allow India to benefit from international cooperation in the civil nuclear sector.

The Hindu, 25 April 2006

Pakistan to propose draft on safe seas

ISLAMABAD, April 24: Pakistan on Monday said that it would propose a draft agreement on prevention of incidents at sea for safe navigation during the three-day talks with India on nuclear and conventional confidence building measures (CBMs) beginning on Tuesday. The talks during the first two days, being held under the ongoing composite dialogue process between the two countries, would focus on the CBMs in the nuclear field. These would be followed by one-day talks on the conventional CBMs on April 27, Foreign Office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam told a weekly briefing here. Ms. Aslam said Pakistan has already tabled several proposals and "intends to have more proposals" during the discussion. "We will approach the talks in a very constructive manner and a positive frame of mind," she said. Following the third round of talks in August last year, the two countries signed an agreement for pre-notification of flight-testing of ballistic missiles and operationalised the hot line at the level of Foreign Secretaries for emergency contact on nuclear related matters. At the last meeting in New Delhi, as per an understanding of 1999, India had given a draft agreement to Pakistan for undertaking measures to reduce the risk of accidental or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons under their respective control. At the last meeting on conventional CBMs, both sides had agreed to implement the 1991 Agreement between Pakistan and India on Air Space Violations in letter and spirit and upgrade the existing hotline between the two NGOs. Ms. Aslam said technical level discussions on operational and logistic details of the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar truck service and the Rawalakot-Poonchh bus service would be held in New Delhi on May 2, 3. The spokesperson said that Pakistan was in touch with the Indian authorities for the consular access and subsequent release of Pakistanis in their custody. She said there are 535 Pakistanis in Indian jails including 476 civilians and 59 fishermen.

The Indian Express, 26 April 2006

India, Pakistan begin talks on nuclear CBMs

ISLAMABAD, April 25: India and Pakistan on Tuesday began expert-level talks on nuclear and conventional Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) during which officials from both sides are expected to finalise a draft agreement on reducing risk of nuclear accidents and prevention of incidents at sea between the navies of both countries. On the first two days of the three-day talks the parleys would be devoted to working out new CBMs on the nuclear front and discussions would be held on April 27 to explore possibilities for CBMs in the conventional field as well. During the talks on Tuesday and Wednesday the two sides would discuss Pakistan's proposal of an agreement on prevention of incidents at sea in order to ensure safety of navigation of naval vessels and aircraft belonging to the two sides, Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson said on Monday.

The Hindu, 26 April 2006

Manmohan not for coercive methods against Iran

TASHKENT, April 25: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reiterated the Indian Government's stand on the Iranian nuclear issue that "maximum possible scope should be given to dialogue, discussion, rather than to coercive methods." He told The Hindu, in response to a question, on board the special Air India flight taking us from Berlin to Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, that he found large-scale support, including in Germany, for such a view. Asked for an update on how he saw the situation developing on the Iranian nuclear issue, Dr. Singh told me: "I don't know the stage of negotiations between the P-5 and Iran but I do know where we stand. And our stand is that Iran is a signatory to the NPT [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty]; and as a signatory to the NPT, it must have all the rights for the peaceful uses of atomic energy. And simultaneously, it must honour all the obligations that go with being a member of the NPT regime." "I recognise some problems have arisen in recent years about certain aspects of the Iranian nuclear programme, which have raised doubts. But I do believe that, by and large, there is support, large-scale support for the view that [on this issue] maximum possible scope should be given to dialogue, discussion, rather than to coercive methods." "We have a long civilisational relationship with Iran. We want to strengthen our relationship. And our influence is to ensure that this problem is resolved to mutual satisfaction through dialogue and discussion."

The Hindu, 27 April 2006

India, Uzbekistan must fight terrorism together: Manmohan

NEW DELHI, April 26: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday said New Delhi and Uzbekistan should fight terrorism collectively. Speaking at a banquet hosted here by Uzbek President Islam Karimov, he asked Tashkent to lead the way in ensuring peace and stability in the region. "Our common objective is to seek peace and prosperity for our people. Terrorism is a menace that must be fought collectively." "Stability and prosperity of Central Asia is in the interest of not just India but the world community as a whole. This goal cannot be reached without Uzbekistan, which must lead the way," the Prime Minister said. Uzbekistan, which shares a border with Afghanistan, is also facing terrorism in some parts. During his 90-minute talk with Dr. Singh, Mr. Karimov said Uzbekistan, one of the world's 10 largest producers of gas, could offer exploration facilities to Indian companies in the hydrocarbon sector with a proposal that the two countries share extracts equally. Uzbekistan "resolutely backed" India's claim to permanent membership of the expanded United Nations Security Council. The two leaders discussed terrorism, drug trafficking, the Afghanistan situation and U.N. reforms. Enhancement of energy, economic and trade cooperation also figured prominently. The two sides signed seven agreements including a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation between the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Uzbekistan's National Holding Company, Uzbekneftegaz.

The Times of India, 28 April 2006

Japan, India to hold disarmament talks

TOKYO, April 27: The Indo-US civilian nuclear pact would be among a host of issues to be discussed between India and Japan during their first senior working-level talks on disarmament and nonproliferation next week. The talks, to be held next Monday in New Delhi, are based on an agreement their nations reached during Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso's visit to India in January, the Foreign Ministry here said on Wednesday. Under the accord, talks of this kind will be held annually, it said. While the Indian delegation will be led by Hamid Ali Rao, joint secretary for disarmament and international security affairs of the Ministry of External Affairs, the Japanese delegation will be led by Takeshi Nakane, director general of the Foreign Ministry's Disarmament, Non-proliferation and Science Department. The two countries are expected to take up during their discussions the Indo-US civilian nuclear cooperation, the state of India's missile development and measures on the reduction of biological and chemical weapons. Japan at the same time will call on India to step up its involvement in disarmament efforts.

The Hindu, 29 April 2006

Islamabad, Teheran begin talks on landmark gas pipeline project

ISLAMABAD, April 27: Pakistan and Iran on Friday began three-day talks here on the proposed multi-billion Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project. The Pakistan side is led by Secretary Petroleum Ahmed Waqar, while Deputy Oil Minister Nejad Hosseinian is leading the Iranian delegation. The focus of talks will be on technical issues. Talking to the media, leader of the Pakistan delegation said a trilateral meeting was to be held in the third week of next month and there was no truth in speculation on 'withdrawal' of India from the project. Leader of the Iranian delegation said with oil prices soaring, the project was very important for Pakistan and India. "We will discuss pricing formula in talks. If we can not reach any agreement, then the issue will be discussed in Oil Ministers' meeting in Teheran next month," Mr. Hosseinian told journalists on his arrival at Islamabad airport. He said Pakistan had sent a draft gas pricing formula to Iran based on domestic pricing mechanism and the Iranian delegation would discuss the same with Pakistani officials. "I am hopeful that Iran, Pakistan and India will finalise all aspects of the project in two months." The meeting is taking place a few days after a telephonic talk between Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his Pakistani counterpart Pervez Musharraf on the project. Mr. Hosseinian said Iran was interested in the early implementation of the project. Iranian official news agency IRNA has quoted the Minister as saying, "if India do not take any decision by May end, we will go ahead with Pakistan to implement it. The report said India would be welcomed whenever it wants to join the project.

The Hindu, 30 April 2006

Designation as terrorist outfits: Islamabad silent

NEW DELHI (JHARKHAND), April 29: Pakistan chose not to react to the decision of the Bush administration to designate Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) and Idara Khidmat-e-Khalq (IKK) as terrorist outfits even as the JuD denounced it as a move by Washington to please New Delhi. In an announcement on Friday the U.S. Department of State said JuD and the IKK have been placed in the Specially Designated Global Terrorist Designation (SDGT) of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). It said the April 27 action under Executive Order 13224 blocks all property and interests in property, of the JUD and IKK that are in the United States, or come within the United States, or under the control of U.S. persons. The announcement said the LeT is one of the three largest and best trained groups fighting in Kashmir against India. It said after the Secretary of State's

esignation of the LeT as a terrorist organisation in 2001 and the Pakistan Government's ban on the group, the LeT named itself JUD in order to evade sanctions."JuD established the IKK as a public welfare organisation that it utilises to collect funds and undertake other activities. The LeT has been sanctioned by the United Nations 1267 Committee for its association with the Al-Qaeda," the announcement said. There was no immediate reaction to the announcement from Pakistan. In the past Islamabad has not necessarily gone by the decision of the State Department in banning organisations based or connected to Pakistan.