

The Indian Express, 1 December 2005

**'US needs proof of India's N-separation'**

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 30: A delegation from the United States led by Senator Dan Burton today sounded optimistic about the US Congress passing a legislation to enable implementation of the Indo-US nuclear deal once New Delhi has provided "clear evidence" in the form of a roadmap for separating civilian and military nuclear entities. "The members of Congress who recently learned of the agreement want to see concrete evidence that there will be a marked delineation between civil use of nuclear equipment that we sell to India and military use," said Burton. If this evidence-which can be a blueprint or a roadmap for separating the two in the days ahead-is found credible, Burton said he was "confident that the enabling legislation will be passed". Once known as an India-baiter, Burton said he favoured a strong relationship between India and the US. He, however, pointed out that his concerns in the past have been on human rights violations in Kashmir but he saw hope in the peace process under way between India and Pakistan.

The Indian Express, 1 December 2005

**Maniyappan: Taliban still a threat, UN told** (Lalit K Jha)

UNITED NATIONS, NOV 30: India's permanent representative to the United Nations, Nirupam Sen, has told the world body that Al Qaeda and Taliban continue to pose a serious threat to Afghanistan's security and stability. Addressing the UN General Assembly session yesterday, Sen said the threat was underlined by the recent "escalation in violence" in Afghanistan. He said this was best illustrated by the murder of development and humanitarian personnel, including that of Raman Kutty Maniyappan, a driver with BRO. Referring to Maniyappan's murder, Sen said Al Qaeda and the Taliban continue to receive support from across the border - a veiled reference to Pakistan. "There are clear signs such elements continue to receive support and safe haven across the border from southern and south-eastern provinces of Afghanistan," Sen said. Condemning the "inhuman and barbaric killing" of Maniyappan, who was abducted on November 19, Sen said: "The Taliban and its backers bear the responsibility for the consequences of this outrageous act." Sen said the BRO was helping build roads in Afghanistan - vital for its development and the welfare of its people. "It is inconceivable anybody should be opposed to it and threaten those working on it," he added. The envoy said he hoped the perpetrators would be brought to justice.

The Indian Express, 2 December 2005

**India, Russia to sign four agreements during PM's visit** (Dadan Upadhyay)

MOSCOW, DECEMBER 1: India and Russia will sign four agreements in the spheres of defence and space, during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's annual summit with President Vladimir Putin, scheduled for December 4-6. "The cooperation between India and Russian in the fields of defence and space, is a very important component of our overall strategic partnership between the two countries. There is a desire on both sides to strengthen this component," Indian ambassador to Moscow Kanwal Sibal said ahead of the Prime Minister's visit. He noted that issues relating to defence, space and energy security will be high on the agenda of the summit.

The Hindustan Times, 2 December 2005

**Saarc nations finalise free trade deal**

Union Commerce Minister Kamal Nath said on Friday that the seven South Asian countries have finalised an agreement to set up a free trade area, a move predicted to more than double the size of the regional market. The landmark deal to create a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) was signed in Islamabad in January 2004 during a summit of regional leaders with January 1, 2006 set as a deadline for implementation. However, the deal by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), was expected to become fully operational only by 2016. "The South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) Agreement has been finalised," said the Commerce Minister. The statement was issued after "receiving intimation from Kathmandu about the deliberations of the Committee of Experts on SAFTA which met there from November 29 to December 1, 2005 to resolve the outstanding issues so as to complete the negotiations," Nath said.

The Indian Express, 2 December 2005

**India, US close to inking high-tech space pact**

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1: Taking forward the agenda of civilian space cooperation, India and US are looking at soon finalising a technology safeguard agreement (TSA) on cooperation in the sector. Both sides today agreed on an elaborate action plan. "Removal of some of the restrictions has made a difference to our trade in high-tech products," Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran said today at a joint press interaction with US Under Secretary for Commerce and industry David H McCormick. The discussions between the two officials came following the industry-to-industry interaction as part of the Indo-US High Technology Cooperation Group here. Emphasis was also laid on expanding cooperation in defence technology. Saran revealed that India had received a draft of the TSA. "We hope to be able to conclude that very soon," he said. Saran said all pending issues related to a US payload on Chandrayan, India's first lunar mission set for launch in 2008, have been resolved. It was also decided to set up a private sector working group on biotechnology and initiate an Indo-US Nanotechnology Collaborative

Programme for long-term basic research and application. New Delhi has also suggested creating a joint fund for R&D in nanotechnology.

The Indian Express, 2 December 2005

**'India ready to help Lanka peace process'**

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka on Thursday claimed that India was ready to help it revive the peace process and said new Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse would visit New Delhi soon. India is ready to assist Sri Lanka in the way they wanted, Constitutional Affairs Minister D E W Gunasekara said without elaborating. The minister brushed aside a deadline set by the LTTE to resolve the island's drawn-out ethnic conflict. The Tigers said on Sunday that unless the government came up with a reasonable political settlement they would resume their struggle for independence

The Indian Express, 2 December 2005

**Post-quake, first LoC bus rolls** (Bashaarat Masood)

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 1: Karvan-e-aman, the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad peace bus that began service on April 7 this year, has resumed operations following the October 8 earthquake that devastated Uri and Muzaffarabad. There were 20 passengers, including eight women, on board today. These included four residents of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, who had come across to Kashmir earlier by the same route. Five passengers from PoK crossed over to this side of the Line of Control. S L Ramulu, Regional Passport Officer, Srinagar, said: "We resumed the bus service today. The bus moved upto Kaman and 20 passengers were on board. They included 16 fresh passengers from our side and four stranded passengers of other side."

The Indian Express, 3 December 2005

**EU backs India's joining ITER talks**

BRUSSELS, DECEMBER 2 The European Commission voiced support on Friday for India's participation in talks over a multibillion-dollar experimental nuclear reactor, along with six partner countries backing the so-called ITER project. The next session of negotiations on ITER-planned by the European Union, the United States, Russia, Japan, South Korea and China-will be held in South Korea next Tuesday, the EU's executive arm noted. "The European Commission has today officially informed the Indian authorities that it supports the participation of India in the ITER negotiations," the Commission said in a statement. "India's participation should now be discussed with the other international parties: the US, China, South Korea, Russia and Japan as part of the ongoing negotiations of the international agreement that will set up ITER," it said. The six ITER partners agreed in June to build the main ITER facility in Cadarache, southern France, after Japan withdrew its bid to host the \$12 billion, 30-year project.

The Indian Express, 3 December 2005

**Navy unsure of Beijing's long-term maritime goals'** (Shiv Aroor)

New Delhi, December 2: Indian and Chinese navies have scheduled many engagements for the coming year but India is still unsure about Beijing's long-term maritime intentions. "The Chinese Navy is not really a concern to us. We only wonder what their long-term intentions are, but we are not at all averse to better relations with the PLA," Navy chief Admiral Arun Prakash said at a press conference ahead of Navy Day this morning. Stating that inter-Naval relations between the two countries were contingent on political relations, the Navy chief said it was possible that in the coming months, the two Navies could "meet somewhere in the open sea, undertake exercises and work together." Interestingly, the Navy is establishing strategic relations with its neighbours in a fashion similar to its Chinese. Over the next two months, Admiral Prakash is scheduled to visit Myanmar and Bangladesh, which have understandings with Beijing but not with India.

The Hindu, 4 December 2005

**Russia planning war games with India, China** (Vladimir Radyuhin)

MOSCOW: Russia plans to hold war games with India and China, a top defence official here said. "Our goal is to organise such multi-country military exercises [with both India and China] within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation," Chief of the Russian General Staff Yuri Baluyevsky told The Hindu ahead of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit. China, along with Russia, is a founding member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) that also includes Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. India joined it as an observer last July, along with Pakistan and Iran. "The joint war games our paratroopers held with the Indian military this year showed the importance and practical weight of the eastern vector of Russia's foreign policy," the four-star General said. "Our relations with the neighbours in the west and east are based on mutual interests. We have mutual interests with India and China, including in the sharing of defence skills and experience."

The Hindu, 4 December 2005

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

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has proposed technical-level talks on the Khokrapar-Munnabao rail route, linking Sindh

with Rajasthan, from December 11 to 15. The talks are scheduled to be held in New Delhi. Both sides have agreed, in principle, to begin the rail link by January 1. Foreign Office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam told the media that Pakistan awaited confirmation from India on the proposed dates. According to diplomatic sources New Delhi should not have any problems with the dates. The talks, to be attended by Railway officials from both sides, would cover issues such as frequency of the train service, the fares and the issue of visas. The train service along with proposed opening of the Karachi and Mumbai consulates around the time would be of immense help to the people of Sindh province and the port city of Karachi. It is estimated that nearly 90 per cent of the Indian visa seekers hail from the province of Sindh and city of Karachi. People from the province have to travel all the way to Islamabad to obtain visas and traverse through Punjab to visit Rajasthan.

The Indian Express, 5 December 2005

**PM to take up nuclear reactor issue with Putin** (Pranab Dhal Samanta)

MOSCOW, DECEMBER 4: As India and US prepare for another meeting later this month of the joint working group on implementing the July 18 joint statement, New Delhi is eyeing Russia to deliver on four additional nuclear reactors for Koodankulam during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's stay here. The PM, who arrived here this evening, will raise this along with the fuel for Tarapur during his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday. The PM made it clear that fuel for Tarapur is a "separate issue" and must not be linked with fulfilling commitments made in July 18 joint statement.

The Hindu, 5 December 2005

**Fuel for Tarapur not related to nuclear deal with the U.S., says Manmohan Singh** (Siddharth Varadarajan)

On board PM's aircraft: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on Sunday that the question of supply of low-enriched uranium (LEU) for the Tarapur nuclear reactors was "separate" from the timetable and conditions under which the July 18 Indo-U.S. nuclear deal was to be implemented. Accordingly, India fully intended to seek a Russian commitment for the supply of the vital fuel. "The fuel for Tarapur is a separate question, it is not related to the nuclear deal," Dr. Singh told reporters accompanying him on his visit to Moscow. "Issues relating to energy security will figure in my discussions [with President Putin] and it is quite possible that we may touch upon [LEU for Tarapur] as well." According to senior officials, the Prime Minister's comments on the Tarapur issue being distinct from the overall Indo-U.S. nuclear framework sprang directly from the text of the July 18 agreement. An official said: "The agreement is clear: 'In the meantime, the United States will encourage its partners to also consider this request (of fuel supplies for safeguarded reactors at Tarapur) expeditiously.' This means the supply of LEU is not linked to the implementation of other commitments like separation of civil and military facilities."

The Indian Express, 6 December 2005

**3 Meghalaya forest officials taken captive by BDR: BSF** (Tilak Rai)

SHILLONG, DECEMBER 5: Three Meghalaya forest officials who strayed into Bangladesh territory have been taken captive by Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) at Jaliakhola in Jaintia Hills district of Meghalaya, sources said on Monday. The state government has initiated efforts to get them released, and a flag meeting between Border Security Force (BSF) and BDR is scheduled on Tuesday, they said. A BSF official said forest guards W Swer and R Pohlong along with forester W Lyngdoh accidentally entered Bangladesh and BDR on patrol arrested them. He said, "We have officially lodged a protest with BDR and would be seeking their safe and immediate release." He said straying into the neighbouring country during routine patrolling was normal and usually the trespassers are caught and handed back.

The Indian Express, 6 December 2005

**India, UK ink film production pact**

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 5: Indian films would now be co-produced with UK-based firms. Besides, "dirty money" which the underworld is known to be pumping into film production, is likely to be curtailed. India has signed a co-production agreement with UK aiming at promoting film industries in each other's territory, and helping Indian producers gain access to "clean finance". Sources in the I&B Ministry said that it would give Indian producers access to subsidies, incentives, and tax-breaks offered to the film industry in UK besides enabling them to obtain funds from financial institutions. "Of course, for film-producers of UK, India will provide for a larger market and help them market their films in India," said a senior official. I&B Minister Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi today signed a pact to this effect with UK's Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sports, Tessa Jowell. It will help film producers of the nations get to pool creative, artistic, technical, financial and marketing resources to produce films and television programmes.

The Hindu, 7 December 2005

**India, Russia inching towards fresh nuclear cooperation** (Siddharth Varadarajan)

Moscow: The question how to expand cooperation between Russia and India in the field of energy - and especially civilian nuclear energy - figured prominently in the summit between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

and President Vladimir Putin here on Tuesday, though both sides were wary of publicly fleshing out any of the new nuclear ideas under consideration. Russia has provided two 1000 MW reactors for the Kudankulam nuclear power plant in Tamil Nadu but has so far been non-committal on India's request for two to four additional reactors for the same project, citing its obligations as a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. But the July 18 Indo-U.S. nuclear agreement has opened up a window which the Indian nuclear establishment is keen to exploit. Accordingly, while the two leaders did not discuss specific figures for additional reactors at Kudankulam, Indian officials said they agreed that there were "good prospects for expanding cooperation in all sectors of civil nuclear cooperation."

The Hindu, 7 December 2005

**ITER project: India becomes full partner** (R. Ramachandran)

New Delhi: The International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project on Tuesday admitted India as a full partner into the consortium. This decision was taken at the ongoing ITER Negotiations at Jeju, Republic of Korea. The ambitious multi-billion dollar project is aimed at demonstrating the scientific and technological feasibility of controlled nuclear fusion as a future source of energy. India will be the seventh participating member of ITER. The other members are China, the European Union (EU), Japan, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States. With India's entry, half of humanity is now participating in this unique scientific mission to devise ways of tapping this enormous source of energy. After protracted and acrimonious negotiations, Cadarache in France was selected in June as the site for building the reactor. The ITER, based on the frozen design of 1998, is expected to be up and running by 2015.

The Hindu, 8 December 2005

**Saran: no promise to Burns on Iran energy deals** (Siddharth Varadarajan)

On board PM's aircraft: Expressing surprise at the remarks of a senior United States official to the effect that India had "assured" Washington that its energy deals with Iran were only "hypothetical" and "years away," Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran said his Government had not provided any such assurances. In a speech at Johns Hopkins University on December 1, Nicholas Burns, U.S. Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, said, "The Indians have assured us there is no plan on the table that is ready for decision by the Iranian and Indian governments, that any plans, any discussions, have been hypothetical and are years away." Mr. Burns is the Bush administration's point man on Iran, and its chief interlocutor with India. Though Mr. Saran said he had not seen a text of the speech, he denied such an assurance had been conveyed. "I do not know who it is who is supposed to have assured him because it certainly was not us," the Foreign Secretary said in response to a question from reporters.

The Indian Express, 8 December 2005

**Saran to take up democracy, arms with Nepal** (Pranab Dhal Samanta)

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 7: In the midst of hectic political activity in Nepal where pressure is building on King Gyanendra after political parties reached an understanding with the Maoists, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran is planning a three-day visit to the country when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is away for the East Asia Summit. The Foreign Secretary is planning to visit Nepal on December 11-13 and is expected to meet senior officials in the Nepal government, including the King. His visit comes at a time when the political circles in Nepal are abuzz with word out that the King may appoint a Prime Minister. More importantly, India too has been increasing pressure on the King given that he has not taken concrete moves towards restoration of democracy in Nepal. India had released part of the non-lethal military aid to Nepal after Gyanendra promised the Manmohan Singh in Jakarta eight months ago that he would take steps towards consolidating multi-party democracy. The PM pointed out the lack of progress on this to Gyanendra when the two met last month on the margins of the SAARC Summit in Dhaka. The King recognised the importance of involving political parties in the process and the two leaders agreed that official-level contact should be maintained between both countries. However, India's recent proposal to review the Indo-Nepal transit treaty has led to much discomfort in Nepal. The treaty is up for renewal in 2007, but the proposal has brought back fears of 1989 when India shut down all but two of the 15 transit points. The latest round of talks on the transit treaty concluded last Saturday.

The Indian Express, 9 December 2005

**Lanka peace: Norway for 'close talks' with India** (Shiv Aroor)

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 8: Hours after Sri Lanka's new President overturned an earlier statement and asked Norway to resume its role as facilitator of peace talks between the government and Tamil rebels, Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg arrived in New Delhi to consolidate India's support before facilitating the initiation of the next round of talks. Stoltenberg met PM Manmohan Singh on Thursday and will hold another meeting on Friday as well. Speaking to reporters this morning, Stoltenberg, whose visit is ostensibly to discuss energy, free trade and bilateral relations, said, "My visit gives me the opportunity to have direct dialogue with the Indian leadership on the Sri Lankan peace process. It is important that we agree on all matters before we proceed, and more important for India and Norway to continue their close dialogue as far as the peace process is concerned."

The Indian Express, 9 December 2005

**India gets entry into nuclear fusion project, On ITER, EU plus 5 say yes**

TOKYO, DECEMBER 8: The European Union and five participant countries to the international thermonuclear experimental reactor project have decided to allow India to join the project on the condition that the country limits use of the technology to peaceful purposes. The EU and Japan, China, Russia, South Korea and the United States made the decision during a meeting on Monday on Jeju Island, South Korea. They have been discussing India's membership since the country expressed in July its will to join the project. The five members asked India to limit the use of nuclear technology to peaceful purposes as India is not a member of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT). In June, the members decided to build the world's first nuclear fusion reactor in Cadarache, Southern France, after a fierce competition between the EU and Japan. In return, the members agreed to support a Japanese candidate for the chief of the project, in addition to building a research centre in Rokkasho in Aomori prefecture in Northern Japan. The members are currently working to establish an organisation to manage the fusion reactor.

The Hindu, 9 December 2005

**India, 15 Asian nations agree on combatting bird flu**

Beijing, Dec. 9 (PTI): India and 15 other Asian countries have agreed to exchange information, develop new vaccines and enhance investment in their joint efforts to control the spread of bird flu wrecking havoc in the region. The 16 Asian countries and six international organisations reached the consensus entitled 'Kunming Initiative' at a ministerial conference on controlling the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), which concluded in Kunming, capital of southwest China's Yunnan province on Wednesday. Since late 2003, HPAI has hit more than 20 countries and regions, especially those in Asia. It caused tremendous losses to poultry industry in the world and Asia in particular and posed great threat to both animal and public health. HPAI-hit countries and regions shall timely notify international organisations and neighbouring countries of the outbreak, its evolution and control measures, said the initiative, calling for the establishment of a communication mechanism to share epidemic information.

The Indian Express, 11 December 2005

**Draft formula for East Asia summit (P. S. Suryanarayana)**

SINGAPORE: Ministers from 16 countries, including India, have finalised a draft declaration for the first-ever East Asia Summit (EAS) to be held in Kuala Lumpur on December 14. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and leaders from 15 other countries, including China and Japan besides South Korea and Australia, will attend the EAS being convened by the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The United States is not an invitee to the summit. The draft formula, adopted by the economic ministers from EAS countries at a meeting in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, is understood to reflect their commitment to deepen integration and for the creation of a community in the region. Senior officials of the EAS countries first negotiated the draft formula at their meeting in Kuala Lumpur a few days ago. India was represented at Saturday's meeting by Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Kamal Nath.

The Hindu, 11 December 2005

**Focus on India, Manmohan will tell ASEAN (Amit Baruah)**

NEW DELHI: India is "the market" on which the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and East Asian powerhouses China, Japan and South Korea should focus, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will tell a gathering of leaders in Kuala Lumpur next week. During the Fourth ASEAN-India summit on December 13, he will also call for greater links in education between India and South-East Asian nations. Pointing out that the rate of growth in trade between India and ASEAN, as well as between India and East Asia, was impressive, official sources stressed that South Korea was today the second largest foreign investor in the country. Malaysia had committed itself to making major investments in the infrastructure sector.

The Hindu, 12 December 2005

**India needs to look East: Manmohan (Amit Baruah)**

KUALA LUMPUR: India does not need to look West to attract investment, but should focus on South-East Asia and East Asia as the region had the largest savings surplus in the world, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on Sunday. Dr. Singh said East Asia and South-East Asia were of the "greatest importance" to India as it sought more investment. Talking to correspondents en route to Kuala Lumpur, Dr. Singh said India had a "benign" relationship with South-East Asia and had no disputes with any country in this part of the world. Reiterating India's determination to conclude a free trade area agreement with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Dr. Singh said New Delhi's vision at the East Asia Summit (EAS) was to bring about an Asian Economic Community. He said an Asian Economic Community would constitute a "new magnet, a new pole" for growth and stability in the world economy. Asked about the resistance in New Delhi to the operation of Chinese

companies, Dr. Singh said he welcomed Chinese investments.

The Hindu, 12 December 2005

**Corrugated sheets sans "made in India" marking for PoK** (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations will soon place orders with India for import of five lakh corrugated sheets for construction of shelters to thequake-affected in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and in parts of the North West Frontier Province. According to sources here, the Pakistan Government has given the green signal to the United Nations Development Programme for the import through the Wagah border subject to two conditions. The sheets should not have `made in India' markings. This condition has been imposed apparently for reasons of "political sensitivities." The organisers have been told that the consignments of sheets will be cleared on a case by case basis. Weeks after the October 8 earthquake, Pakistan accepted the Indian offer of corrugated sheets.

The Hindu, 13 December 2005

**Manmohan calls for creation of pan-Asian free trade area** (Amit Baruah)

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Monday called for creation of a pan-Asian free trade area (FTA). Like the European Union and the North American Free Trade Area, he said the pan-Asian FTA would be a dynamic, open and inclusive association of regional nations. "This will not be easy, and it cannot be done in a day. There will be sceptics. But for believers, it is eminently possible. I am convinced that this is the only way to move forward," he said. Addressing the ASEAN (Association of South East-Asian Nations) Business Advisory Council, he said the east Asian community was a natural extension of the ASEAN-India engagement process. "The India-ASEAN free trade agreement could become the first step in the process. The limited FTA is a beginning but we must ensure that it leads to explosive growth in trade and investment."

The Indian Express, 13 December 2005

**India still sees role for king as Saran meets Gyanendra today** (Yubaraj Ghimire)

KATHMANDU, DECEMBER 12: India's Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran will be meeting Nepal's King Gyanendra on Tuesday, amidst speculation that India wants the king to play an expansive and positive role in taking forward the understanding between the Maoists and Nepal's political parties in pursuit of peace and democracy. Saran, who is on a three-day official trip, will return to Delhi after meeting the king. His visit to Kathmandu takes place in the context of Nepal's procuring arms and ammunition from China, and also of the departure of the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Pyar Jung Thapa for Islamabad on Monday. Saran had a dinner meeting with the COAS last night. Although two sides are tight lipped on what transpired, India is believed to have conveyed a message consistent with its earlier approach that the resumption of arms supply to the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) would be linked with the king's restoring democracy. Sources said India also conveyed that it was not scared of Nepal playing the China card.

The Hindu, 13 December 2005

**"E.U. must cut farm subsidies"** (N. Ravi Kumar)

Hong Kong: On the eve of the sixth World Trade Organisation Ministerial conference that gets under way here, India looks forward to specific commitments from the developed countries and not just "a statement of good intentions." These commitments should be in the form of cuts in the subsidies doled out to farmers in developed countries and the opening up of the market to agricultural products from other nations. Declaring that the WTO (trade negotiations process) could not move forward without "India being on board," Union Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath said on Monday that the country was keen on measures to improve market access to its goods, correction in the anti-dumping law and removal of non-tariff barriers. The Minister briefed the media after attending meetings, including those with WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy, European Union Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson and Pakistan's Trade Minister Humayun Akhtar Khan, who is also the facilitator for the discussions on NAMA (Non-Agricultural Market Access). India, Mr. Kamal Nath said, was keen on better market access for its products in which its strengths lay, including textiles and leather. Even while underscoring the need for the developed countries to reduce their domestic subsidies, he said there could be no compromise on 65-70 sensitive products of India. The country could not provide market access in these areas.

The Indian Express, 14 December 2005

**BSF posts on Indo-Bangla border likely to be doubled** (Sudhi Ranjan Sen)

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 13: In what could be read as New Delhi's growing sense of unease with Dhaka, India has decided to more than double the number of border outposts along the Indo-Bangladesh border and place sensors along the border to curb cross border illegal infiltration. According to senior government officials, India will have at least 1,200 BOPs along the Indo-Bangla border against the current 500. On the India-Pakistan border there are 650-odd BOPs. The distance between each BOP along the Bangladesh border will come down from 8-10 Km to 3.5 km. At a recent meeting attended by representatives of the MEA, PMO and the Home Ministry it was decided to have all the 1,200 BOPs in place by the 2006 end. India also plans to complete the remaining 1,000 km of fencing and flood-lighting the entire the border by the end of next year.

The Indian Express, 14 December 2005

**N-energy: Tokyo, Seoul ready to help Delhi** (Sunit Arora)

KUALA LUMPUR, DEC 13: Japan and South Korea discussed cooperation with India on civilian nuclear energy during two separate bilateral meetings with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today. Both countries agreed to have further discussions on this matter with India. In South Korea's case, it was decided that both countries' respective National Security Advisors will meet soon to take the issue forward. The PM first met his Japanese counterpart - Junichiro Koizumi - who had visited India earlier this year. Briefing the media, Rajiv Sikri, Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs, said the Joint Study Group on economic cooperation will be available in a few months. This would mark the road forward for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Japan. India and Korea have also agreed to begin discussions on working towards an FTA. The proposed freight corridor project - in which the Japanese government has expressed its interest - was also discussed, as was cooperation with the Navy coast guard.

The Hindu, 14 December 2005

**Saran meets Gyanendra**

KATHMANDU: Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran on Tuesday met King Gyanendra of Nepal and urged him to restore democracy in the Himalayan kingdom at the earliest.

The Hindu, 14 December 2005

**Manmohan: we'll be flexible on FTA** (Amit Baruah)

KUALA LUMPUR: India will be pragmatic and flexible while negotiating a free trade area (FTA) accord with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said here on Monday. The Prime Minister's assurance came at the fourth India-ASEAN summit after his Malaysian counterpart Abdullah Ahmed Badawi expressed the 10-member grouping's "concern" at New Delhi's proposal to leave out a "substantial portion of trade" from the FTA by excluding a large number of goods from tariff concessions. The ASEAN leaders, Mr. Badawi said, sought a political commitment from Dr. Singh that India remained firm on negotiating the FTA. "As the ASEAN Chair, I bring this matter up so that we, the leaders, could provide some political direction on moving forward the negotiations," Mr. Badawi said.

The Hindu, 15 December 2005

**India, China can move faster to resolve border dispute: Manmohan** (Amit Baruah)

NEW DELHI: India and China can move forward faster to resolve their boundary dispute, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told presspersons after a meeting with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday. Underlining the importance of India's relations with China, he told Mr. Wen that it was his "most important meeting" in the last three days. Sounding bullish on bilateral relations, Dr. Singh said the two sides agreed to implement the recommendations of their joint study group on economic relations, which would include a preferential trade arrangement, or "some variant" with China. The Prime Minister said both sides had come to the joint conclusion that their economic relations were moving in the "right direction". Currently, the two-way trade stood at about \$20 billion, Dr. Singh said on board a special flight back home. "We also discussed cooperation in science and technology," the Prime Minister said about his talks with Mr. Wen. "I thanked the Chinese Prime Minister for supporting India's membership of the ITER [International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor]."

The Hindu, 15 December 2005

**East Asia Summit forum for dialogue on strategic issues** (Amit Baruah)

KUALA LUMPUR: The first East Asia Summit here on Wednesday decided to set up the EAS forum for dialogue on "broad strategic, political and economic issues" of common interest and concern to promote peace, stability and economic prosperity in East Asia". The heads of government from 16 countries - 10 from the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and India, China, South Korea, Japan, Australia and New Zealand - issued the Kuala Lumpur "declaration" on the EAS after nearly three hours of discussions. It would be an "open, inclusive, transparent and forward-looking" forum in which ASEAN would be the "driving force", working in partnership with the other six countries, the declaration said. Participation in the EAS would be based on criteria established by ASEAN. It would be hosted and chaired by an ASEAN member-country, which holds the ASEAN Chair, and held back-to-back with the annual ASEAN summit. The EAS modalities would be reviewed by all the participating countries, the declaration said, without making any reference to a role for the "ASEAN plus three" forum, which groups China, South Korea and Japan with ASEAN. The EAS called for fostering strategic dialogue and promoting cooperation in political and security issues to ensure that the countries lived in peace with one another and with the world at large in a "just, democratic and harmonious environment".

The Hindu, 16 December 2005

**Talks on India-U.S. nuclear deal proceeding on "strict reciprocity"**

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Thursday said in the Rajya Sabha that there was no stalemate

in the talks between India and the United States on the Joint Nuclear Statement signed on July 18. Talks were proceeding on "strict reciprocity." Seeking to allay members' apprehensions on the U.S. seeking more concessions, the Prime Minister said the joint statement was a "binding constraint" on both the countries. "If the United States does not carry out its commitments under the joint statement, then India is also free not to carry out its reciprocity," he said. Responding to supplementaries during the question hour, he said the Working Group headed by Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns had one "good meeting" and were scheduled to meet again later this month. He said approval by the U.S. Congress to the July 18 Statement signed by U.S. President George Bush and himself was the concern of the American administration.

The Indian Express, 16 December 2005

**Navy chief to head for Yangon, okay Myanmar wishlist** (Shiv Aroor)

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 15: A large inventory of arms and aircraft for supply to Myanmar will be firmed up when Navy chief Admiral Arun Prakash visits Yangon in the third week of January. In a visit that seeks to dilute Beijing's deep strategic links with the military dispensation in Myanmar, the Navy plans to finalise the supply of BN-2 Islander maritime surveillance aircraft, deck-based air defence guns and a host of training exchange programmes for Myanmarese soldiers. New Delhi's defence engagement with Yangon has become more emphatic-this is the third visit by a service chief since November 2004-chiefly because the last year has been marked by a wilful push by China to consolidate decades-old military ties with Yangon, and more specifically in maritime cooperation.

The Hindu, 16 December 2005

**India, Brazil call EU's bluff** (Vikas Dhoot)

HONG KONG, DECEMBER 15: A major war of words and numbers took centrestage today over the cuts in industrial tariffs demanded by rich nations from countries like India and Brazil. Both India and Brazil had yesterday slammed the rich countries for demanding tariff cuts of more than 70 per cent, when they would cut their tariffs only by 25 per cent. In a strongly-worded release, the EU said that India and Brazil are trying to mislead the world on tariff cuts. "Don't be fooled: the real cuts requested by the EU in industrial tariffs are 16% for Brazil and 29% for India. The average cut in applied NAMA tariffs in developed countries on the basis of the EU proposal would be more than 50%." At a G-20 briefing this evening, Nath said, "I saw this press release and I thought it would be some good news but it's only a statement of confusion. I think the EU wants to rewrite the Doha Declaration and the Framework Agreement. We all know that bound rates is the basis of WTO negotiations. I don't see how the EU's trying to twist it to make it applied rates." Explaining the anomaly in the EU missive, Nath said "(This is) just as in domestic support to agriculture, cutting money you don't spend, doesn't amount to reduction of support."

The Indian Express, 17 December 2005

**Cabinet green signal for bus to Lahore**

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 16: The Union Cabinet has cleared the way for an agreement with Pakistan for starting a bus service between Amritsar and Nankana Sahib and a trial run for the Amritsar-Lahore bus sometime this month. A Standing Committee will be set up once an agreement is signed. Parliamentary Affairs Minister P R Dasmuni said the pact aims at expanding economic cooperation and facilitating people-to-people contact between the two countries. A trial run for the Amritsar-Lahore bus had been scheduled for October but had to be put off following the October 8 earthquake that rocked Jammu and Kashmir. As per the agreement, the designated operators for the bus service will be Punjab Roadways and Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation. Initially there will be one service every week along the 56-km route. The bus will leave from Amritsar on Tuesdays and return on Wednesdays while the Pakistan bus will depart Lahore on Friday and return on Saturday.

The Indian Express, 17 December 2005

**India to push Pakistan on pipeline deadline**

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 16: Disappointed by the slow progress by Pakistan on the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project, New Delhi plans to push Islamabad to commit February as the deadline to hold the first trilateral meeting of the three nations. The timeline for holding the trilateral was December 31, but a delay by Pakistan in appointing a consultant to suggest the project structure and the legal and financial arrangements, has pushed that deadline. Though Pakistan says it would appoint the consultant within the next two weeks, India wants a firm commitment. During tomorrow's session of the third meeting of the Indo-Pakistan joint working group on the pipeline, it would set Feb. as the new trilateral deadline. The trilateral would set in motion the final talks between the three to jointly thrash out the pricing, gas volume and the project structure and have a framework agreement for the pipeline by the middle of next year. At present, the three are talking to each other through bilateral joint working groups. At today's meeting of secretary-level delegations, New Delhi suggested a joint consortium to build the \$7-billion pipeline and another to operate it. The two consortiums would comprise Indian, Pakistani and Iranian national oil companies and international firms.

The Hindu, 18 December 2005

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

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

The Indian Express, 19 December 2005

**As Saran heads for US, view from Delhi: key to headway lies in basics** (C Raja Mohan)

NEW DELHI, DEC 18: India believes that a reaffirmation of political objectives that shaped the Indo-US nuclear pact last July will facilitate a mutual understanding on its early implementation. As Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran heads to Washington this week for a critical round of nuclear talks, India hopes a clarification of the fundamentals will help resolve the many complex issues relating to nuclear separation and international safeguards. Motivated criticism in the United States and ill-informed fear in India since the pact was signed five months ago, has muddied the nuclear debate in both capitals and between them. The Indo-US nuclear pact, signed by President George W Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on July 18, was initiated on the political premise in Washington that a strong India is in the interest of the United States. And central to the pact is the explicit American acknowledgement of the existence of a military nuclear programme in India.

The Indian Express, 19 December 2005

**India, Pak to discuss Sir Creek survey**

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 18: Taking forward the understanding reached at the meeting between their foreign ministers in October, India and Pakistan will hold technical talks here on Tuesday to discuss methods for the first ever survey of the Sir Creek by both countries. While the dispute has been continuing since Independence, there has never been an objective survey of the Creek, with both sides relying on documents dating back to 1914. These were basically the agreements reached by princely states and both countries have been disagreeing on the interpretation of these in the current context. With pressure mounting to settle maritime boundaries by 2009, the two countries decided to first undertake a joint survey of the Creek for an updated version of the ground situation given that the Creek is a shifting geographical body.

The Hindu, 20 December 2005

**India, Pak. talks on Sir Creek issue today**

New Delhi: Taking a step forward towards resolution of the Sir Creek issue, India and Pakistan are scheduled to hold technical-level talks on it here today to decide terms of reference for Joint Survey of the disputed boundary. At the two-day talks, the Indian side will be led by Deputy Surveyor General Brigadier, Girish Kumar, while the Pakistani delegation will be headed by Surveyor General, Maj. Gen. Jameel-ur-Rehman Afridi, External Affairs Ministry spokesman said. The two countries had decided to conduct the Joint Survey of the disputed boundary during talks between then External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh and Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, on October 4. The Joint Survey will form the basis of negotiations for resolution of the issue that has been nagging the two countries since partition. The report of the survey will have to be presented for discussions at third round of Composite Dialogue Process beginning next month.

The Hindu, 20 December 2005

**Third round of dialogue in January** (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD: The third round of India-Pakistan composite dialogue would be kicked off in New Delhi sometime in January. Foreign Office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam told journalists at the weekly news briefing on Monday that Islamabad and New Delhi were in the process of finalising the schedule for the meeting at the level of Foreign Secretaries to mark the inaugural of the third round. At the inaugural round the Foreign Secretaries would review the progress made at the two rounds since the process was revived in 2004, consider further discussion and proposals on Kashmir and security confidence-building measures (CBMs) and work out the tentative timelines for official-level talks on the remaining seven subjects. The subjects include Siachen, Sir Creek, promotion of people-to-people contacts, cooperation on terrorism and drug trafficking and enhancement of commercial contacts. In response to a specific question Ms. Aslam said that at the second round both sides had exchanged some proposals on Siachen and hoped for "more developments" at the third round of talks.

The Indian Express, 20 December 2005

**India worried over China, Pak arms supply to Nepal**

NEW DELHI, DEC 19: Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee acknowledged today that the reported supply of arms and training to Kathmandu by China and Pakistan was a concern and that the government was addressing it

through its missions in both countries. "A problem is there. We have taken it up diplomatically. Let us see how it can be resolved," Mukherjee said this evening, when asked about the UPA government's opinion on Beijing's reported supply of arms and ammunition and Islamabad's offer to King Gyanendra of training of personnel. After a virtual embargo of arms by New Delhi, there has been furious military-diplomatic activity among Nepal, China and Pakistan. After an October visit to Beijing where he is understood to have closed a deal for certain weapon systems from China, Nepal's Army chief General Pyar Jung Thapa returned from Islamabad on Saturday where it is learnt that he was offered comprehensive training capsules for RNA soldiers. Today, he hosted a four-member military delegation from China.

The Hindu, 21 December 2005

#### **Amritsar-Lahore bus service from Jan. 20**

New Delhi : Taking yet another step to enhance people-to-people contact, India and Pakistan today decided to launch the long-awaited Amritsar-Lahore bus service from January 20 and Amritsar-Nankana Sahib bus link by February 27. The agreements on launching the bus services were signed in Lahore today after the third round of technical-level two-day talks. Pakistani side will run the inaugural bus from Lahore to Amritsar on January 20. The Indian side will ply its first bus from Amritsar to Lahore on January 24, the joint statement said.

The Hindustan Times, 21 December 2005

#### **India, China win joint bid for Syrian oil field**

India and China, often fierce rivals in the race for global energy supplies, have won a joint bid to buy Petro-Canada's 37 per cent stake in Syrian oil fields for \$573 million, reports said on Wednesday. India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), both state-owned, will have equal stakes in the Al Furat oil and gas fields. This is the first time the two Asian giants have bid together for overseas reserves to feed their oil-hungry economies. In all, 8 firms were in the race for Petro-Canada's stake in the Syrian venture, the news agency said. The acquisition followed the countries' announcement in April they would team up to bid for some energy projects as they seek to keep their economies booming although they said they would still compete for others.

The Hindustan Times, 21 December 2005

#### **US Congressmen seek to oppose India nuclear deal**

Two US lawmakers have proposed a resolution expressing congressional disapproval for President George W Bush's "sweeping" nuclear agreement with India, one of the congressmen said. If the resolution passed, it would signal lawmakers' "disapproval" of the July 18 deal, which has generated strong opposition from non-proliferation advocates because it would give India access to previously banned technology. "The administration's move to launch nuclear cooperation with India has grave security implications for South Asia and the entire world," said Democratic Rep Edward Markey of Massachusetts, who introduced the resolution with Republican Rep Fred Upton of Michigan last week.

The Indian Express, 21 December 2005

#### **Canada urges India to open up n-reactor**

WASHINGTON, DEC 20: Canada has urged India on Monday to allow nuclear inspectors access to a Canadian-supplied reactor, where experts say the country produces a significant amount of its weapons-grade plutonium. Lack of independent access to the Cirus research reactor in north of Mumbai, is one of the issues slowing implementation of a sweeping nuclear cooperation deal that the United States announced with India on July 18. That deal has come under fire from the US Congress and from non-proliferation experts, who say the case of the 40-megawatt reactor raises questions about India's trustworthiness. In a statement, Canada said it has urged US and Indian officials to designate the reactor a civilian facility open to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The Indian Express, 21 December 2005

#### **Bangladesh to release forest officials** (Sudhi Ranjan Sen)

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 20: Days after India issued a note verbale and expressed extreme displeasure at three forest officers of Meghalaya being taken hostage by the Bangladesh Rifles, Bangladesh has decided to drop cases against the trio and release them. Three officers led by Forester Moses Lyngdoh had accidentally crossed into a Bangladeshi enclave in Lalakhol in Meghalaya when they were taken hostage by Bangladesh Rifles. The others arrested were Woldis Swear and Ram Pohlong. The Border Security Force-which guards the Indo-Bangla border-had immediately intervened and sought their release. Though Bangladesh had initially agreed to release the foresters they later did a volte face and argued that the three officers would be tried in Bangladesh. They had also claimed that the Indians were carrying weapons and had deliberately crossed over with hostile intentions. Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran summoned the Bangladeshi High Commissioner and issued a note-verbale when the existing mechanism of dispute resolution between the two countries did not yield any results.

The Indian Express, 21 December 2005

### **Russia to supply Tunguska systems**

MOSCOW, DEC 20: Russia will supply four batteries of Tunguska-M1 systems to India as part of a recently-signed deal between the two countries. "India will receive four batteries of Tunguska-M1 systems worth about \$400 million," Interfax news agency, quoting a source in the military-industrial complex, reported. The source pointed out that this was not the first contract for the supply of Tunguska-M1 systems to India. According to sources, India employs over 60 Tunguska systems, including two batteries (12 units) of Tunguska-M1 missile systems. Tunguska-M1 gun/missile system for low-level air defence was designed by KBP Instrument Design Bureau in Tula and is produced by the Ulyanovsk Mechanical Plant in Ulyanovsk. It is capable of hitting both fixed-winged planes and helicopters as well as ground targets.

The Hindu, 22 December 2005

### **Talks on Sir Creek conclude**

New Delhi : India and Pakistan on Wednesday concluded their two-day technical level talks on demarcation of Sir Creek, a strip of marshland on the western border, here apparently without reaching any agreement on the terms of reference for a joint survey. A brief joint statement issued after the hectic parleys, which carried on till late in the evening, said "in pursuance of the understanding reached during the Foreign Minister-level meeting in Islamabad on October 3-4, the Indian and Pakistani delegations met in New Delhi on December 20-21 to formulate the terms of reference for carrying out the Joint Survey of the Sir Creek." "The two sides held constructive and fruitful discussions. They will report to their respective governments on the discussions." The Indian delegation was led by Brig. Girish Kumar, Deputy Surveyor General, and the Pakistani side by Maj. Gen. Jamil-ur-Rehman Afridi, Surveyor General of Pakistan. However, sources said no agreement was reached at the talks.

The Indian Express, 22 December 2005

### **'N-separation should not affect Indo-US strategic programme'**

WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 21: India and the US today began talks here on the bilateral nuclear deal with Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran asserting the separation of civilian and military sites should not affect New Delhi's strategic programme. Saran began his parleys here with a call on US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and followed it up with discussions with under-secretary of state political Affairs Nicholas Burns on the proposed civilian nuclear deal with India. Both Saran and Burns were joined in the discussions by senior officials of the two governments. Details of the meeting are unavailable but the two are said to be discussing various issues, including the civilian nuclear cooperation deal which is said to be in a critical stage of negotiations. The focus of the Saran-Burns meeting is on the civilian nuclear cooperation with the main objective of moving forward the discussions, said a senior administration official. "It is a complicated process and needs continuing discussions. The Burns-Saran meeting has been planned for a long time," the official remarked. He also said that another objective of the meeting was to "start making preparations" for President Bush's visit to India scheduled in February/March 2006.

The Indian Express, 23 December 2005

### **Navy to boost maritime ties with Dhaka, Recommendation: Restart naval relations after nine years of stagnation** (Shiv Aroor)

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 22: Naval Headquarters is preparing a detailed report for the Foreign Ministry on Navy chief Admiral Arun Prakash's visit to Dhaka earlier this week. In it the core recommendation will be to formalise military maritime channels in the Bay of Bengal connecting the two countries and to re-start maritime relations after nine years of stagnation. As a beginning, the navies of the two countries have discussed the possibility of initially connecting Vishakapatnam and Chittagong. An access agreement with Dhaka, to be part of the Navy's recommendations to the MEA, would allow for more extensive patrolling, both seaborne and from the air, in this sensitive stretch of sea. It will also be recommended that New Delhi offer to maintain some of Bangladesh's ports to compete with Beijing's strategic gains. China signed a training and equipment agreement with Dhaka earlier this year. Based on the MEA's response, follow-up discussions will be firmed up with Dhaka.

The Indian Express, 23 December 2005

### **IPR pact signed, India to push Russia on technology transfer** (Shiv Aroor)

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 22: With the overdue intellectual property rights (IPR) agreement with Russia finally signed earlier this month during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Moscow, the Defence Ministry plans to make it clear to the Putin government that it will take "a serious view" of any further resistance to the transfer of technology for previously discussed weapons purchases. It is understood that long-negotiated contracts for the purchase of the Igla air defence systems and Smerch multi-barrel rocket launchers have hit roadblocks because Russia has decided not to transfer technology. A top official at the Department of Defence Production told The Indian Express, "Previously there were delays because there was no IPR agreement. Now there is no excuse. We will be pursuing the matter to make sure that all big purchases are coupled with incentives for indigenous military industry as well." The IPR agreement also paves the way for a host of upgrade programmes that Russia

had previously refused to entertain. For instance, the Navy now has to make do with a limited upgrade of its Tupolev-142 long range maritime patrol planes because Russia quoted too high a price for an upgrade and then refused to participate in tripartite upgrade with Israel, citing IPR concerns.

The Indian Express, 24 December 2005

**Expect some significant advance on n-deal: Saran**

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 23: India and US stayed on course to take the nuclear deal forward with Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran indicating at the end of his two-day visit to Washington that "significant advance" can be expected on this initiative even before US President George W Bush's visit to India. The Foreign Secretary said his talks with Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs -his counterpart in the Joint Working Group on implementing the July 18 joint statement-were positive and should lead to a successful outcome in the days ahead. According to him, the two sides were conscious of the timeline before them and exchanged ideas on how to fulfill the commitments made on July 18 at the earliest. The Indian side is understood to have shared ideas on plans to separate civilian and military nuclear entities. For its part, US apprised the Indian delegation of its efforts in introducing a legislation making a special exemption for India from controls that currently prevent full civilian nuclear cooperation between the two countries.

The Indian Express, 24 December 2005

**Kalaikunda gets ready to receive F-16s again; IAF, Singapore Air Force 18-day exercise from January 3**

KOLKATA, DECEMBER 23: The American F-16s will be back at Kalaikunda Air Force base in West Midnapore district, about 200 km from Kolkata, for the second time in less than two months. It's time for yet another joint air exercise, this time between India and Singapore. The Singapore Air Force will be bringing in eight F-16s and 130 personnel for the exercise at Kalaikunda. The exercise, to begin from January 3, will continue for 18 days, according to Wg Cdr R K Das, the official spokesman for the Ministry of Defence in Kolkata. A similar exercise between India and the United States Air Force (USAF) at Kalaikunda in November had triggered a massive protest rally from the CPI(M) and other Left parties. Nearly 60,000 people had assembled outside the air base to lodge their protest against such joint military exercise with US forces. Like the Indo-US exercise, the Indo-Singapore air exercise is also going to be an elaborate one. A similar exercise between the two forces was held in Gwalior, this one is the second in the series. In 2004, the IAF had deployed the Surya Kiran formation aerobatic team and the helicopter display team, Sarang, at Singapore during their annual air show.

The Indian Express, 24 December 2005

**India not keen on regional tsunami warning network (Pallava Bagla)**

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 23: India is reluctant to join other Indian Ocean rim nations wanting to kick-start the installation of a tsunami early warning system. The country sticks out as a "data holdout" since it allows other nations access neither to real-time data from its seismic network nor to online tide gauge data. Similarly, the readings from the network of deep-sea sensors it hopes to have in place by September 2007 may be available for use only to its national agencies.

The Hindu, 25 December 2005

**Contaminated French warship to leave for Gujarat yard shortly (Vaiju Naravane)**

Paris: The highly contaminated French aircraft carrier, Clemenceau, will shortly leave the southwestern port of Toulon to be dismantled at the ship-breaking yards at Alang in Gujarat, the Defence Ministry confirmed here. The decommissioned warship is laden with asbestos, a highly toxic substance which, in principle, should not be exported since France is a signatory to the 1972 Basel Convention on Toxic Waste. The export of such waste is banned. The announcement led to protests from environmental activists, who accuse the French government of wishing to rid itself of a polluted hot potato. Late Friday several dozen members of Greenpeace entered the premises of the Indian embassy to protest against the French government's decision and the Indian government's continued silence on the subject. They handed over a cardboard model of the Clemenceau to Deputy Chief of Mission K.V. Bhagirath. The Indian mission has since contacted the French authorities and also informed New Delhi of the situation.

The Indian Express, 26 December 2005

**U.S. eyes big arms sales to India in '06**

U.S. arms sales to India WASHINGTON, December 26: The Bush administration is maneuvering to balance possible big new U.S. arms sales to archrivals India and Pakistan in the new year. In the past week, U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld have made separate visits, not announced in advance, to Pakistan, a key ally in the U.S.-declared war on terrorism. Islamabad will make up its mind in the coming year on a U.S. offer to resume F-16 fighter aircraft sales after a 16-year break, Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri was quoted by the Associated Press of Pakistan as saying after Cheney left. Earlier this month, Air Force Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Kohler, head of the Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency, said he

expected Pakistan to modify buying plans because of the Oct. 8 earthquake that killed more than 73,000 people.

The Hindu, 26 December 2005

**Pakistan bans most Indian TV channels** (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD: Cable operators and television viewers in Pakistan are upset with the decision of Pakistan Electronic Media Regulator Authority (PEMRA) to bar 35 television channels, most of them Indian. They have been demanding lifting of the ban on Indian news channels and cinema theatre owners are seeking permission to screen Indian films. In its communication to the cable operators, PEMRA asked them not to beam the 35 listed channels on the ground that they were "non-permitted" channels. The two associations of the cable operators said that they had received the list.

The Hindu, 27 December 2005

**SAFTA will be a historic milestone: Kamal Nath**

New Delhi, Dec. 27 (PTI): The South Asia Free Trade Area Agreement, which comes into effect from January 1, 2006, and provides for free trade in goods amongst SAARC countries, will be a historic milestone in the economic profile of the region, Commerce Minister Kamal Nath has said. "Despite the limited concessions of South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement so far, our regional trade has failed to register the kind of growth which would give us satisfaction. Implementation of SAFTA will help to correct this by further strengthening our trade with SAARC countries," Nath was quoted as saying in an official release. Over 90 per cent requirements of South Asian countries are sourced from outside the region and a major part of exports are also destined for countries outside the grouping, he added. The signing of the Agreement on SAFTA two years ago at the Islamabad Summit was the culmination of a clear commitment arrived at in the Kathmandu Summit of 2002 for the creation of the South Asian Economic Union.

The Hindustan Times, 27 December 2005

**India, Pakistan discussing Kashmir self-rule: Official** (Muhammad Najeeb)

Islamabad, December 26, 2005: Pakistan and India are discussing a proposal to demilitarise Kashmir and introduce self-governance in the region, an official said in Islamabad on Monday. "The proposal was originally moved by President Pervez Musharraf and later this proposal was widely discussed and hailed by Kashmiri leaders," foreign office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam told a press briefing. Aslam said Pakistan backed the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions to resolve the Kashmir issue in keeping with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. The discussion of the proposal on Kashmir could be an interim relief measure for Kashmiris, she said.

The Indian Express, 27 December 2005

**Trade deal on Chinese minister's India agenda** (Vikas Dhoot)

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26: India and China will take up discussions on a bilateral Regional Trade Agreement (RTA) when Chinese Commerce Minister Bo Xilai visits New Delhi in the first week of March. Xilai will be arriving to co-chair a meeting of the Joint Economic Council (JEC) between India and China with Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath. The council hasn't met for several years. The two sides had decided that the JEC would take up the RTA issue when Chinese premier Jibao visited India in April. "The two ministers have not been able to find time so far. The Chinese Minister has agreed to come to India in the first week of March for the JEC meet, which would kick off discussions on setting up the RTA," a senior Commerce Ministry official informed The Indian Express.

The Indian Express, 27 December 2005

**Rajapakse's visit to focus on peace**

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26: In the midst of efforts to save what is now a shaky peace process, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse will make his first trip as head of state to India on Tuesday. Heading his agenda will be a request to India to play a more active role in the Lankan peace process. Indications are that Rajapakse is in favour of India joining as co-chair in the peace process initiated by the US, Japan, Norway and the European Union. He is expected to discuss this with the political leadership here as New Delhi has so far maintained a cautious distance while keeping itself apprised of developments in the peace process. During the visit, the Sri Lankan President will hold detailed discussions with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh besides calling on President APJ Abdul Kalam. Among other points of discussion will be the LTTE's offer for talks in Europe and Colombo's insistence on an Asian venue.

The Indian Express, 28 December 2005

**Balochistan: India asks Pak to show restraint**

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 27: India today voiced concern at spiralling violence in Pakistan's Balochistan province and advised Islamabad to "exercise restraint". It underlined the need for the Pakistan government to concentrate on addressing the grievances of the people in the region through peaceful discussions. "The government of India

has been watching with concern the spiralling violence in Balochistan and heavy military action, including use of helicopter gunships and jet fighters by the government of Pakistan to quell it," MEA spokesperson said responding to a question. "We hope the government of Pakistan will exercise restraint and take recourse to peaceful discussions to address the grievances of the people of Balochistan."

The Hindustan Times, 28 December 2005

#### **Indo-US nuke deal aimed at making world more secure: Sen**

Washington, December 27: Dismissing the notion that its agreement with the US on sharing civilian nuclear technology amounts to weakening of non-proliferation regime, India has said the deal is based on a "very close" understanding of security interests of the two countries and aimed at making the world more secure. "India has a unique track record. It is the first country in Asia to build a nuclear reactor on its own. You are talking about a country which has about 50 years of experience of handling nuclear assets," Indian Ambassador to the US Ronen Sen said in an interview to the Dallas Morning News. He rejected the notion that the Indo-US nuclear deal amounts to weakening of the non-proliferation regime. "Absolutely not. It is based on a very close understanding of the national security interests of both our countries and to making the world a safer and more secure place," he told the paper.

The Hindustan Times, 28 December 2005

#### **US slaps sanctions on two Indian chemical firms**

Washington, December 27: Two Indian chemical companies along with six Chinese government-run firms have been slapped with US sanctions for allegedly selling missile goods to Iran, media reports said on Tuesday. However, the details of the transfers to Iran were not disclosed. Bush administration officials, who preferred anonymity, were quoted as saying by the Washington Times that the punitive measures had been under consideration for the last several weeks and had been approved by the Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick. According to officials the decision to impose sanctions would be formally published in the Federal Register over the next several days, the report said. The two Indian firms identified are Sabero Organics Chemical and the Sandhya Organics Chemical. The sanctions were imposed under the Iran Non-proliferation Act, which Congress passed in 2000 to deter international support for Iran's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes and missile-delivery systems.

The Hindu, 29 December 2005

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

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

The Hindu, 29 December 2005

#### **India, Iran begin talks on gas pipeline project**

New Delhi: India and Iran began talks here on Wednesday on the modalities of implementing the gas pipeline project through Pakistan with the aim of reaching a formal trilateral agreement by June next year. A special Indo-Iran joint working group started the discussions with the focus on pricing of gas, the pipeline route and the consortia that will implement the project. Official sources said that the reports of the technical and financial consultants to the project, BHP Billiton and Ernst and Young, are likely to be considered by the working group.

The Indian Express, 30 December 2005

#### **India-Iran gas pipeline work may begin by 2007: Pak (K J M Varma)**

ISLAMABAD DECEMBER 29: Pakistan's Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources, Amanullah Khan Jadoon, informed the Senate on Thursday that the multi-billion-dollar Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline project could take off from 2007 despite political and security problems faced by the three countries. The minister said a working group between the petroleum ministers of Iran and Pakistan has held four meetings so far and in the last meeting in November this year, the issues on the project from the point of view of seller and buyer were deliberated upon. Considering the size and magnitude of the project, both sides agreed to continue to interact with each other to develop a world class safe and viable project, he said. The minister said Pakistan and India have also constituted a joint working group (JWG) to exchange views and develop a commonly acceptable approach towards the project.

The Indian Express, 30 December 2005

**Australian Navy to break ice at Port Blair exercise** (Shiv Aroor)

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 29: Australia's traditional and longstanding suspicion of India's maritime security intentions may finally come to an end. For the first time, it is sending a team to the "Milan" multinational exercise to be hosted by the Indian Navy at Port Blair next month. Although a standing invitee for many years, Australia did not participate in the last four rounds. In clearly a post-tsunami volte face, it has now communicated to Naval HQs its intention to improve relations by initially cooperating in mine warfare and clearance diving operations. In 2008, it will also, for the first time, bring a warship into Indian waters for exercises, sources said.

The Indian Express, 30 December 2005

**Cabinet clears SAFTA**

New Delhi: The Union Government has cleared the Agreement for South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) aimed at providing free trade in goods among SAARC member countries from January 1, 2006. SAFTA is expected to integrate the entire South Asian market of seven countries, paving the way for an eventual single market in the region. Disclosing this after a Cabinet meeting, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said approval had been given to the agreement signed by SAARC nations in Islamabad in January last year. He said that India being the larger and relatively developed economy will be providing concessions to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) such as Bangladesh and the Maldives, including a mechanism for compensating revenue loss due to reduction in duties, technical assistance. The rules of origin (ROO) clause under the agreement was also cleared as well as a sensitive list of items that are not covered by the trade liberalisation.

The Hindu, 31 December 2005

**Decks cleared for French ship's departure for India** (Vaiju Naravane)

Paris and Toulon naval base (southern France): A judge in Paris on Friday threw out the suit filed by four anti-asbestos associations seeking to stop the departure of the French aircraft carrier the Clemenceau to India. With the last legal hurdle now out of the way, the asbestos-laden, decommissioned ship could weigh anchor for India as early as Sunday or Monday. It is to be dismantled for scrap at the Alang ship breaking yards in Gujarat by Shree Ram Scrap Vessels Pvt Limited, one of the largest ship breaking companies in India. The steel from the Clemenceau, weighing an estimated 26000 tonnes, is valued at 8 million euros.

The Hindu, 31 December 2005

**Baglihar issue: Pakistan denies media reports** (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

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