

The Hindu, 6 December 2006

Russia talking with India, US on joint navigational system

Moscow, Dec. 6 : Russia is negotiating with India, US and some other countries on the joint use of its national global navigational satellite system GLONASS, a top space official said Tuesday. GLONASS, the Russian version of the US Global Positioning System (GPS) is designed for both military and civilian purposes and allows users to identify their location in real time. It can also be used in geological prospecting. "We are in active talks with India, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and some other countries on the joint use of the GLONASS space system," Chief of the Federal Space Agency, Anatoly Perminov, said in the course of an internet conference. "As far as other countries are concerned, we are primarily in talks with the United States and the European Space Agency to prepare agreements on the use of GLONASS jointly with GPS and Galileo navigation systems," Perminov said. He said GLONASS has been in an intensified stage of development since the president urged for active work on the system...

The Hindu, 6 December 2006

India saddened by Fiji developments

New Delhi, Dec. 6 (PTI): India on Monday said it was "saddened" by the toppling of Fiji's government by the military, and hoped that power would be returned to the people at the earliest. "We are saddened to learn about the turn of events in Fiji, and hope the rule of law will prevail and power will be returned to the people at the earliest," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson, Navtej Sarna, told reporters here. He said India greatly valued its relations with Fiji, a country with which it shared cultural and historical links. The military in Fiji on Monday ousted the government and dismissed elected Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase. Military Commander, Voreqe Bainimarama, who was locked in a stand-off with Qarase, said he was suspending certain provisions of Fiji's Constitution and taking over the role of President. Qarase also said an interim government would be appointed pending elections...

The Hindu, 6 December 2006

India, Romania to exploit new areas of bilateral trade

New Delhi, Dec. 6 (PTI): Mutual co-operation between India and Romania in IT, tourism, bio-technology, aviation and petro-chemicals will push bilateral trade between the two countries to touch the \$1 billion mark in the next 2-3 years. "Tourism can be one important sector for economic co-operation between India and Romania apart from the already existing areas like drugs, pharmaceuticals, inorganic chemicals, machinery and instruments among others. We anticipate bilateral trade to cross the one billion dollar mark within 2-3 years," Romanian Ambassador, Vasile Sofineti, said at an industry meeting organised by CII. He said that the bilateral trade between India and Romania stood at \$ 450 million in 2005. Trade between India and Romania had been stagnating between 1999-2001. However, it grew impressively at a rate of 103 per cent in 2004 and by 69 per cent in 2005...

The Hindu, 6 December 2006

Musharraf offer nearer to New Delhi's bottom line

SRINAGAR: Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's four-point proposal on Jammu and Kashmir is part of a carefully constructed 'and closely guarded' mosaic of initiatives intended to breathe life into the dialogue process this winter, a highly placed Government source told The Hindu. On December 12, New Delhi will resume formal discussions with the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference, with the secessionist coalition chairman, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, meeting the Centre's official interlocutor, N.N. Vohra. He will then travel to England to study the accords that underpinned the Northern Ireland peace process. At once, the former Supreme Court judge, Saghir Ahmad, is expected to chair the first meeting of a working group that will witness a long-delayed dialogue between the Centre and major political parties on Jammu and Kashmir's constitutional relationship with India. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh promised to set up the working group in May, but disputes over its leadership and composition delayed its creation...

The Hindu, 6 December 2006

Not concerned at Sino-India ties: Pak.

ISLAMABAD, Dec. 6 (Xinhua): Pakistan said on Tuesday it is not concerned at the growing ties between India and China. "No one should be surprised over relations between China and India as the two are big countries," Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri, said. Talking to a private TV channel here on Tuesday, Kasuri said India and China are undoubtedly big countries and their economies are fast growing. "Therefore, one should not be surprised over their relations," he said. "However, we should see that Sino-India relations do not create negative impact on our country," said Kasuri. Kasuri expressed optimism over the last month Pakistan-India talks at Foreign Secretaries-level in New Delhi. He admitted that stalemate was created on the bilateral talks following the deadly Mumbai blasts in August. "However, the deadlock in talks has been removed, which is a welcome sign," he said...

The Hindu, 6 December 2006

Republican lawmakers to clear the deal

Washington: Republican lawmakers in the United States will work with members across the aisle so that the US-India civilian nuclear legislation can be completed prior to formal adjournment of the 109th Congress, Senate Majority leader Bill Frist on Tuesday said. Mr. Frist issued a brief statement soon after the Conferees of the Senate to participate in the House-Senate Conference Committee were named earlier in the day. 'Today Senate conferees were named for the US-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation bill. Work will begin immediately with the intention of completing all action by week's end. Together with Senators Allen, Hagel and Lugar, we will work across the aisle with Senators Biden and Dodd to ensure that goal is met,' he said. The Majority Leader has made it known that he would like to wind up Legislative business by December 8 with the House of Representatives also expected to break off by the end of the working week or on December 7...

The Hindu, 6 December 2006

Tough nuclear diplomacy for Indian PM in Japan

New Delhi, December 6: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Japan next week is likely to test his diplomatic skills as he seeks to persuade Tokyo, a key member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and known for its strong views on non-proliferation, to back the India-US civil nuclear deal at the nuclear forum. Although economic issues will dominate the four-day visit beginning on December 13 with a view to forging a special relationship between the two Asian countries, it will have substantial strategic and political content as well. In terms of India's civil nuclear diplomacy, Manmohan Singh's Tokyo visit is astutely timed: it will be the first NSG country the prime minister will visit after a likely approval of the final nuclear bill following a reconciliation conference of the two chambers of the US Congress...

The Hindu, 7 December 2006

Indo-US nuke bill hits procedural roadblock

Washington, Dec. 7 (PTI): A legislation to implement the historic Indo-US civilian nuclear deal appeared to have hit a roadblock when Conferees of the House of Representatives and Senate failed to file a final report with Rules Committee prior to the consideration of the House. At one time yesterday, there was the thinking that the Conferees' committee had agreed on the final version of the legislation that had to clear both the House and the Senate before the Congress adjourns this week for the year to meet in January. One version doing the rounds is that the legislation has become a victim of lame duck politics in the sense that lawmakers are eager to tag legislations that have nothing to do with India or the terms and outlines of what the Conferees have already arrived at...

The Hindu, 7 December 2006

'India-China-Russia mulling trans-border oil pipeline'

Beijing, Dec. 7 (PTI): An oil pipeline running from resource-rich Russia to energy-hungry India and China is under "active consideration", an industry expert has said. "The project is very likely to succeed," a senior research fellow with the Chinese think-tank, China Institute of International Studies, Xia Yishan said at the Third Sino-Russo-Kazakh Oil and Gas Forum held yesterday in Shanghai. Xia, who is an expert in the National Energy Leading Group of the Chinese government and has been actively involved in big oil and gas projects in the country, said several options are under discussion about the contours of the pipeline. The idea for such a pipeline was suggested four years ago, China Daily reported. One plan is for the pipeline to run from Russia to Altay in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China, climb the Tianshan Mountain, and extend south to Kunlun Mountain till it reaches India...

The Hindu, 7 December 2006

PDF hails Musharraf's proposal

Jammu, Dec. 7 (PTI): People's Democratic Front (PDF), a coalition partner in the State government, has hailed Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's 4-point proposal to resolve the Kashmir issue and urged New Delhi and Islamabad to discuss it in order to bring peace in the region. "Pakistani President has shown flexibility over the issue of Jammu

and Kashmir and his 4-point proposal should be discussed by the two neighbours to resolve the problem," PDF chairman Hakeem Mohammad Yaseen said here today. He urged mainstream and separatist parties to "work unitedly" and fight divisive forces which disrupt peace in the region. Peace is essential for development and prosperity in the State, he said...

The Hindu, 11 December 2006

Reject U.S. Act on nuclear deal: BJP

NEW DELHI: The Bharatiya Janata Party has demanded that the Government reject the "Henry J. Hyde United States-India Peaceful Atomic Energy Cooperation Act of 2006," passed by the U.S. Congress on Saturday, instead of "accepting the humiliating conditionalities contained in it." The BJP has decided to take an aggressive stand on the issue in Parliament and seek a complete statement from the Prime Minister within the next two days since the "final product is now before us and it does not look good," said the former Union Minister, Yashwant Sinha, at a joint news conference with Arun Shourie on Sunday. Earlier in the day, the party crystallised its position at a meeting attended by Atal Bihari Vajpayee L.K. Advani, Rajnath Singh, Jaswant Singh, Mr. Sinha and Mr. Shourie...

Hindustan Times, 11 December 2006

US assures India of fulfilling commitments

Washington, Dec. 11 (PTI): The United States on Sunday assured India that it would fulfill all the commitments with regard to the civil nuclear deal made in the July 18, 2005 and March 2, 2006 joint statements. Ahead of External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee's statement in Parliament and the signing of the legislation by President George W Bush, Rice said in a statement that "the United States intends to fulfill all of the commitments it made to India in the July 18 and March 2 Joint Statements". Rice said the bill, which goes to the US President's desk for his signature, explicitly authorizes civil nuclear cooperation with India in a manner fully consistent with the US-India Joint Statements of July 18, 2005 and March 2, 2006...

Hindustan Times, 11 December 2006

Pranab to make statement in Parliament on N-deal

New Delhi, December 11: With main opposition BJP pressing for rejection of the US legislation on civil nuclear deal with India, the government on Monday said External Affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee would make a statement on the agreement in Parliament. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Priyaranjan Dasmunsi made the announcement close on the heels of BJP demanding rejection of the agreement. Seeking to play down the saffron opposition, Dasmunsi said, "like global warming, it is political warming". Having a dig at BJP, he said the saffron party was for closer ties with South American countries like Venezuela, led by staunch anti-US President Hugo Chavez, and not the USA. Dasmunsi said December 18 and 19 have been reserved for a discussion on the deal and advancing of the date depends on other businesses of the House...

The Hindustan Times, 11 December 2006

India, UAE to set up Trade Policy Forum

New Delhi, December 10 :India and UAE will set up a Trade Policy Forum as part of steps to increase bilateral trade. The forum would be co-chaired by Commerce Secretary along with the Director General of Foreign Trade and joint secretary concerned of the Department of Commerce, an official statement said on Monday. "UAE investors would find attractive industrial partners in India to set up mutually advantageous industry complexes in the Gulf and India and serve all markets, notably the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Central Asia," the statement quoted Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath as saying...

Hindustan Times, 11 December 2006

Scientists concerned over Indo-US nuclear bill

New Delhi, December 10:Country's top nuclear scientists have expressed concern over the provision in the bill passed by the US Congress to implement Indo-US nuclear deal that seeks to cap India's right to conduct atomic tests. However, they were of the view that the current legislation was meant only for the US lawmakers and the bilateral cooperation on sharing civil nuclear technology would be governed by the 123 agreement between the two countries. "India need not worry about the legislation passed by the US Congress as it is meant for the US lawmakers. India is obliged only to the bilateral agreement (123 Agreement)," former Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) Chairman MR Srinivasan said. "We have to work for further negotiations on the 123 Agreement. If that is modified in favour of India then we will go ahead in signing the deal," he said...

The Hindu, 13 December 2006

Editorial :Clues to Kashmir peace puzzle

Days after President Pervez Musharraf stunned observers by promising that Pakistan would drop its claims to Jammu and Kashmir if India agreed to a four-point peace plan, his Foreign Office has set off an even larger furore. Responding to questions from journalists in Islamabad, Foreign Office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam asserted that her country had in fact never "claimed Kashmir to be an integral part of Pakistan." It had only insisted that the State's "people should be able to decide their future." Ms. Aslam pointed out that Pakistan-administered 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' had its own constitution, President, and Prime Minister, all of which distinguish it from other States of the country. On point of fact, Ms. Aslam is right. Pakistan's constitution makes no reference to Jammu and Kashmir...

The Hindu, 13 December 2006

India-Japan cooperation on N-energy mooted

Mumbai, Dec. 13 (PTI): A top Japanese scientist yesterday observed that New Delhi and Tokyo can discuss and cooperate on peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Both Japan and India have strong will for peaceful uses of atomic energy and "we can discuss and cooperate (on the issue) together for a peaceful future," Youichi Fujiie, former Chairman of Japan's Atomic Energy Commission, told PTI here. On the Indo-US civilian nuclear deal, he said "it is a bilateral issue and I should avoid giving my comments. We all hope for peaceful use of nuclear energy. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is embarking

tomorrow on a four-day trip to Japan where bilateral cooperation in civil nuclear energy will be high on his agenda. Fujiie said the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) needs to be modified as in the current form it has several problems...

Hindustan Times, 13 December 2006

India, China should rely on fossil fuel: Australia

Australia on Tuesday said that India and China should continue relying on fossil fuels for energy needs despite growing concerns about their impact on global warming. In a speech to the International Energy Agency's (IEA) governing board meeting in Sydney, Australia's Resources Minister Ian Macfarlane said that while there were growing calls for countries to find cleaner energy sources, fossil fuels still had a major role to play. "Despite what some commentators, and sadly, some politicians, may think, development is the best friend the earth has," he was quoted as saying by 'The Age'. "That said, the reality we can't ignore - and must plan for - is that fossil fuels will continue to dominate the global energy mix. This is especially true in China and India."...

Hindustan Times, 13 December 2006

Bush to sign civil nuclear deal into law on Monday

President George W Bush will sign into law on Monday the civil nuclear cooperation deal that allows the United States to sell nuclear technology to India, the White House said. Congress gave the final approval on Saturday to the legislation which the Bush Administration and its allies say will expand ties with the world's largest democracy and open up billions of dollars in trade for US companies. Critics say the legislation, which helps clear the way for India to buy US nuclear reactors and fuel, will undermine efforts to curb the spread of nuclear weapons. But congressional sponsors said the legislation included some restraints, such as requiring the president to stop US exports of nuclear materials if India tested another nuclear device as it did in 1998. India said it views the nuclear cooperation deal as a big step forward but it was wary of conditions attached to it by Congress...

The Hindu, 18 December 2006

Indian lawmakers to debate US nuke deal

New Delhi, Dec. 18 (AP): India's Government was preparing for a blistering parliamentary debate on Monday over a nuclear pact with Washington, which U.S. President George W. Bush was set to sign into law the same day. The deal, strongly opposed by supporters of India's ruling coalition and main opposition party, would allow shipments of civilian nuclear fuel to India, overturning a three-decade-old U.S. anti-proliferation policy. In return, India would accept safeguards and inspections at 14 civilian nuclear plants. Eight military plants would be off-limits. The main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party has called the agreement "unequal," saying its conditions would cripple India's nuclear program and not assure uninterrupted fuel supplies for the country's civilian nuclear reactors...

The Hindu, 18 December 2006

Bush set to sign nuke cooperation bill with India

Washington, Dec. 18 (AP): President George W. Bush is set to sign into law on Monday a bill that would allow shipments of civil nuclear fuel and technology to India in return for India's allowing safeguards at nuclear plants. The administration has said that the landmark U.S.-India nuclear cooperation bill reflects the growing importance of India as a partner and ally. Congress overwhelmingly approved the nuclear bill on Dec. 9. It would allow shipments of fuel and technology for India's allowing safeguards and inspections at 14 civilian nuclear plants; eight military plants would be off-limits. Bush's signature would change U.S. law, but several steps remain before civil nuclear shipments could begin...

The Hindu, 18 December 2006

Row over BrahMos

MOSCOW: India has been caught in a row between Russian weapons companies over the Indo-Russian BrahMos missile that may affect defence cooperation. Dr. A. Sivathanu Pillai, CEO&MD, BrahMos Aerospace Ltd., expressed bewilderment at a sharp attack the Russian Government news agency Itar-Tass mounted last week on India's efforts to promote BrahMos in international markets. Taking objection to the way BrahMos was fielded against not only third country missiles but also Russian-built systems "Moskit," "Club" and X-55 at a recent defence show in Jakarta, Indonesia, Itar-Tass accused the JV "BrahMos Aerospace" of "discrediting" Russian missiles and "squeezing" them from the market...

The Hindu, 20 December 2006

Nuclear deal with U.S. faces renewed criticism from left and right

New Delhi, Dec. 20 (AP): A nuclear cooperation pact touted as the cornerstone of an emerging India-U.S. partnership has faced pointed criticism from India's political left and right, underscoring how far the countries have to go as they try to overcome decades of mistrust. Some have called it an American attempt to undermine India's cherished atomic weapons programme. Others have suggested Washington wants to dictate New Delhi's foreign policy. The criticism has intensified since U.S. President George W. Bush on Monday signed a law allowing Washington to ship nuclear fuel and technology to New Delhi. The new law, which reverses 30 years of U.S. atomic policy, was a key step toward implementing the deal. The pact is firmly supported by India's government and is unlikely to be rejected by New Delhi...

The Hindu, 20 December 2006

Kashmir: how Pakistanis view the shift : Nirupama Subramanian

Pakistanis believe that Pervez Musharraf is preparing public opinion at home for a settlement on Kashmir that may hold less for them and Kashmiris than they have been led to expect all these years. Pakistan's sudden demolition job of its six-decade-old rhetoric on Kashmir has unleashed many kinds of reactions within the country. But all are shot through with the same sense that a historic and unanticipated shift on the issue has taken place, and that Islamabad now wants Pakistanis to think of Kashmir in a way different from what they have been doing all these years. Of course, the hardest hit are the

believers who are shocked and feel betrayed that Pakistan could ever say it never had a territorial claim on Kashmir....

The Hindu, 21 December 2006

It's time India, Pak. work together: Manmohan

Amritsar, Dec. 21 (PTI): Without directly reacting to the latest Kashmir solution formula proposed by Pakistan, Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, on Wednesday said he welcomed "all new ideas with an open mind" and that it was time both countries work together for a new future. "In the last few days, many suggestions have come and I welcome all of them with an open mind. We can create an atmosphere of peace and tranquility through mutual consultations and co-exist peacefully," he told a public meeting here. Addressing the meeting after laying the foundation stone for five projects ahead of the Assembly elections in Punjab, he said "both the countries should forget the past and think of a new future and work together for that." Singh's remarks were an apparent reference to the four point formula proposed by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to resolve Kashmir issue which includes de-militarisation and joint control of the troubled state...

The Hindu, 21 December 2006

"Africa keen on ties with India, China"

NEW DELHI: African nations need more time to debate the expansion of the United Nations Security Council, Alpha Oumar Konare, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, said at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) on Wednesday. Prof. Konare, who strongly favoured the idea of a "United States of Africa," said African nations had no problems with the candidature of the G-4 nations (India, Brazil, Japan and Germany) for a permanent seat on the Security Council. The problem was within Africa and who would represent Africa. On his part, Prof. Konare came out with the idea of a permanent seat being allotted to the 53-member African Union. Calling for coordination on the issue of expansion (which is currently a dead issue on the international horizon), the A.U. Chairperson advocated a "step-by-step" approach as a way out of the impasse...

The Hindu, 21 December 2006

Nuclear power will be key source in India, says Bush

Washington: President George W Bush on Wednesday said atomic power would be a key source of electricity in future in India and China and it made a lot of sense to share technology. Addressing a press conference here, he said nuclear energy was a renewable source and did not produce greenhouse gases. "Nuclear power is going to be [an] essential source of future electricity in the U.S. and places like India and China," said Mr. Bush, who on Monday signed into law a bill providing for civil nuclear cooperation between New Delhi and Washington. "It makes a lot of sense to share technology that will enable people to feel confident that nuclear plants built are safe," he said, adding it would also enable use of technology to reduce wastes and their toxicity...

The Hindustan Times, 21 December 2006

Japan supports providing N-technology to India

Washington, December 20: Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has suggested to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that Tokyo may accept Indo-US nuclear cooperation even though New Delhi has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, sources said in Washington on Wednesday. Japan's suggested the support, which comes at a time when Washington is trying to secure an agreement from a group of 45 nuclear supplier countries to export technology to India, has been conveyed to the US government, said the sources familiar with last week's talks between Singh and Abe. A US administration official indicated that the United States expects Japan's support...

The Hindu, 26 December 2006

Indo-US N-deal pre-occupied foreign affairs

New Delhi, Dec. 26 (PTI): The United States Congressional legislation came as the icing on the cake concretising the nuclear deal with India that stood out as an outstanding success for New Delhi's diplomacy in the year that went by, notwithstanding reservations from the Left and the Right of the political spectrum and nuclear scientists. The year 2006, however, saw the threat of a major setback to the improving ties with Pakistan after the deadly July 11 Mumbai blasts blamed on elements across the border. As the year progressed, the situation on the Pakistan front was resurrected with some mature diplomatic manoeuvres resulting in the resumption of bilateral composite dialogue and setting up of a joint working group on battling terrorism. While the Indo-Pak relations hogged limelight for about five months, the External Affairs Ministry remained pre-occupied throughout the year with the civil nuclear deal with the US...

Hindustan Times, 26 December 2006

Kasuri rules out sudden solution to Kashmir issue

Islamabad, December 25: Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri has said there is no possibility of a sudden solution to the Kashmir issue, media reports said. The English-language The Nation newspaper quoted him as saying during an interview with a private TV channel. Kasuri said, "Our Constitution too provides that any solution to this issue is to be made in accordance with the wishes of the people of the region." He said the final decision on the Kashmir issue would be taken by the Pakistani Parliament. He said only ideas were being floated for brainstorming on both sides of border. Kasuri's remarks came in the backdrop of a debate triggered by Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's 'four-point formula on Kashmir issue', which envisages demilitarisation, self-governance and joint management control in the Himalayan region...

Hindustan Times, 26 December 2006

India, US sign hydrocarbon pact

New Delhi, December 25: In a pattern similar to the recent nuclear cooperation agreement between India and the United States, the two democracies have inked in early December a pact on the hydrocarbon sector that covers petroleum and natural gas. Officials said under the agreement, both countries will provide to each other a 'reasonably balanced' exchange of information about hydrocarbons in their patches. The agreement would also include market information in addition to statistics related to refining

capacity, reserves, production, analytical techniques, system documentation, imports, exports, stocks, bunkers for strategic reserves and demand...

The Hindu, 27 December 2006

India, Russia to hold business summit in Feb.

Moscow, Dec. 27 (PTI): India and Russia are planning to hold an unprecedented business summit in February next year to explore ways to boost bilateral trade to USD 10 billion in coming three years, Indian ambassador Kanwal Sibal said here. During the course of the summit, over 300 top business persons are expected to visit New Delhi in February 2007, shortly after President Vladimir Putin's state visit, to give a new fillip to bilateral economic interaction. According to Sibal, India and Russia have set the target of increasing trade to USD 10 billion by 2010 from the current level of USD 3 billion. Sibal expressed confidence that the Indo-Russian economic forum in New Delhi would help in achieving this goal...

The Hindu, 27 December 2006

Nuclear deal highlight of Indo-US relations in 2006

Washington, Dec 27. (PTI): The intricate negotiations on the civil nuclear deal dominated Indo-US relations in the outgoing year that saw President George W Bush's Republican party swept off its feet in the US Congress, leaving the occupant of the White House a lame duck in the remaining two years of his term. With the Congress having to pave the way for civil nuclear commerce, the focus was on Capitol Hill where lawmakers cut across party lines to join the exhaustive debate on separate bills passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate implement the nuclear deal. Eighteen months after the process began, Bush signed into law the Henry J Hyde United States-India Peaceful Atomic Energy Cooperation Act of 2006 on December 18, setting the stage for negotiations on a bilateral pact on nuclear cooperation. The administration, for its part, made sure its version of the deal, including the ramifications of making changes unacceptable to India, was heard on Capitol Hill. At the same time, it gave the impression of being flexible to consider changes that were within the spirit of the July 2005 understanding between Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh...

The Hindu, 27 December 2006

India hopes Saddam won't be executed

NEW DELHI: India hoped on Tuesday that the death sentence confirmed by an appeals court in Baghdad on the former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, would not be carried out. "It is our hope that the sentence will not be carried out and that the former President's life would be spared. We would also hope that no steps are taken which might obstruct the process of reconciliation and delay the restoration of peace in Iraq," the External Affairs Ministry said in a statement. On November 5, when the death sentence was announced, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said, "such life and death decisions require credible due process of law, which does not appear to be victor's justice and is acceptable to the people of Iraq as well as the international community."

The Hindu, 27 December 2006

Remember lessons from Tarapur :M.R. Srinivasan

After President George W. Bush signed the United States-India nuclear cooperation bill, he called up Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to tell him how pleased he was at this development. While welcoming this event, the Prime Minister took the opportunity to tell the President that there remained areas of concern that needed to be addressed during the negotiation of the bilateral agreement (called the 123 agreement, after the relevant clause number in the U.S. Atomic Energy Act, 1954). The U.S. has entered into some twenty-five 123 agreements with various countries, including the one concerning Tarapur. The Tarapur agreement concluded in 1963 was unique in that it guaranteed supplies of enriched uranium fuel from the U.S. for running the Tarapur reactors for their entire life. However, after 1978 the U.S. did not supply fuel saying its domestic legislation (under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act) prevented it from doing so. India argued that Tarapur was an inter-governmental agreement and hence it had to be honoured by the U.S. But to no avail. However, later, the U.S. allowed France to supply fuel to India. Subsequently, the USSR (now Russia) and even China supplied fuel for Tarapur...

The Hindu, 28 December 2006

Trade with India linked to political reality: Pak.

Islamabad, Dec. 28 (PTI): Maintaining that trade relations with India are linked to "political reality" and cannot be viewed in "isolation," Pakistan has refuted a report in the media that New Delhi has managed to isolate it on the trade front in the South Asian region by forming the BIMST-EC trade bloc. "Pakistan has gradually liberalised trade with India and just recently 203 new items have been made importable from India. The economic relations between the two countries are definitely linked with the political reality and cannot be viewed in isolation," an official statement here said Tuesday night. "Pakistan's trade diplomacy is very active in South Asia to retain the existing share and increase our market share in these economies," the statement said pointing to Pakistan's free trade treaty with Sri Lanka and its plans to have similar arrangement with Bangladesh and Nepal. The statement was in reaction to a report in 'The News' on December 25 that India in retaliation to Pakistan's reluctance to implement South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) has "isolated" Pakistan by forming Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIMST-EC)...

The Hindu, 28 December 2006

'Terrorists using Nepal, Bangladesh borders to enter India'

New Delhi, Dec. 28 (PTI): Terrorists are using new routes from Nepal and Bangladesh to sneak into India, Army chief Gen J J Singh said here asserting that authorities had taken steps to block these entry points. "As terrorists are finding it hard to penetrate the fence and new anti-infiltration systems placed all along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir and in Punjab," Singh said they were now exploring new means to sneak into India." The areas bordering Nepal and Bangladesh are still porous and intelligence reports suggest that terrorists are trying to use them to infiltrate into India," he said on the sidelines of a function held here to launch the logo and mascot for the World Military Games to be held in Hyderabad in October 2007. It is being held for the first time in India. The Army chief's comments assume significance when seen in the backdrop of

official figures tabled in Parliament, which said that rate of infiltration from across the Line of Control had come down this year, even though terrorist infrastructures remained intact on the Pakistani soil...

The Hindu, 28 December 2006

India, U.S. see Saddam verdict differently

NEW DELHI: India's response to the confirmation of the death sentence on the former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, on Tuesday contrasts with the position taken by the United States. Interestingly, the Indian view is quite close to that of the European Union. While the External Affairs Ministry hoped that the sentence on Mr. Hussein would not be carried out, the White House said on Tuesday, "Today marks an important milestone in the Iraqi people's efforts to replace the rule of a tyrant with the rule of law, and the Iraqis deserve praise for continuing to utilise the institutions of democracy to pursue justice. Saddam Hussein has received due process and legal rights that he denied the Iraqi people for so long. So this is an important day for the Iraqi people."...

The Hindustan Times, 28 December 2006

Pranab Mukherjee to visit Sri Lanka in Jan

New Delhi, December 27: Amid raging fighting in Sri Lanka, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee will undertake a visit to the island nation early next month during which the two sides are expected to discuss the status of the peace process there and other issues. Mukherjee is likely to travel to Colombo on January 8 primarily to invite President Mahinda Rajapaksa for the 14th SAARC Summit to be held here in April, official sources said on Wednesday. The visit will provide the opportunity to the two countries to discuss the peace process and humanitarian situation in Tamil-dominated Jaffna, they said. New Delhi has been concerned over the worsening humanitarian situation in Jaffna following an economic blockade...

The Hindu, 30 December 2006

Saddam execution draws strong condemnation in India

New Delhi, Dec 30. (PTI): Political parties in the country today strongly condemned the hanging of ousted Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein saying that it marks the beginning of a "More serious and bigger problem" in the trouble torn West Asian nation. In a strong reaction, Congress said the execution was not the solution to the problem and expressed fear that it will be the beginning of a bigger and "more serious and bigger problem" in that country. Party Spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi said, the development showed those holding powers in Iraq now have failed to win over the hearts and minds of ordinary citizens. Peace, justice and internal harmony could not be achieved by "imposed victor's justice", Singhvi told PTI...

The Hindu, 30 December 2006

S Africa, India strengthen strategic partnership in 2006

Durban, Dec 30. (PTI): The outgoing year saw South Africa buffeted by several scandals and controversies, including the rape trial of former deputy president Jacob Zuma, as it joined hands with India to celebrate the centenary of the launching of the satyagraha by Mahatma Gandhi in Durban. President Thabo Mbeki played a key role in developing

relations with countries like India, the US, Japan, and China but faced accusations of being more "out of the country than inside". Besides visiting countries like Malaysia, Japan, China and the US, Mbeki hosted Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. India and South Africa signed a number of agreements during the visit to strengthen their strategic partnership. India and South Africa jointly promoted the centenary celebrations of the launching of the satyagraha or non-violent struggle initiated by Mahatma Gandhi during his stay in the country. Singh visited the Gandhi settlement in Durban where the satyagraha philosophy was devised and the railway station in Pietermaritzburg where Gandhi was thrown out of a train for riding in a whites-only compartment...

The Hindu, 30 December 2006

US, India set up working group to boost trade in legal services

Washington, Dec 30. (PTI): India and the United States have set up a working group to promote greater interaction between legal professionals and to facilitate trade in legal services between the two countries. Announcing the formation of the group, which comprises legal experts from both countries, Deputy US Trade Representative Karan Bhatia stressed that legal services are integral to today's complex economy. "Legal services are integral to today's complex, global economy. Indian Commerce Secretary Gopal Pillai and I agreed that establishing a Legal Services Working Group is a priority in our bilateral dialogue," Bhatia said. Several American firms are already getting back office and research work done in India, though lawyers from either country are not currently allowed to practice in the other...

The Hindustan Times, 30 December 2006

Border agreements with India, Bhutan pending: China

Beijing, December 29: China has signed border agreements with 11 of its 13 neighbours barring India and Bhutan, with whom negotiations are on to settle the boundary issue in a "fair" and "equitable" manner, the government said in Beijing in a defence policy paper. China has signed land border treaties or agreements with Myanmar and 11 other neighbouring countries, thus resolving boundary issues left from history with these countries, a White Paper on 'China's National Defence in 2006' issued by the State Council, China's cabinet said. The defence policy paper, fifth since 1998, to make Chinese military affairs more transparent, noted that China is currently negotiating with India and Bhutan to settle boundary issues. It says that China pursues a good-neighbourliness policy, and works to enhance friendship and partnership with its neighbours. It calls for settling boundary and maritime demarcation issues with countries concerned in a fair and equitable manner, and through consultations on the basis of equality...