

Hindustan Times, 1 February 2005

India to host G-20 meet in Delhi on March 18

New Delhi, Jan.31.India will host the next meeting of G-20, the group of developing WTO-member countries on agriculture, in New Delhi on March 18.The meeting would be followed by the meeting of G-33, a group of WTO-member countries pushing for Special Products, Special Safeguard Mechanism and market access, on March 19.Consensus to this effect was reached at G-20 meeting held in Davos on January 29, Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath said in a statement in New Delhi. The discussions would cover agriculture as well as other areas of interests to developing countries like services and NAMA, he said. The proposal mooted by Nath was supported by G-20 countries, including Pakistan, Chile and South Africa.

Times of India, 1 February 2005

Iraq turnout goods India to rethink policy (Indrani Bagchi)

New Delhi, The stunning turnout in the Iraq polls has forced the UPA government to revisit its policy and prepare for early re-engagement with the new authority in Baghdad. "The Americans have pulled it off, first in Afghanistan and now in Iraq," said a senior external affairs ministry functionary with grudging admiration while acknowledging that India will have to recalibrate its stance towards Iraq. While the government here is in the "wait-and-watch" mode, it is being recognised that neither the UN nor the European Union or even Iraq's neighbours will be able to ignore the fact that record participation in the US-secured polls has put a stamp of legitimacy on the exercise. "We cannot refuse to reach out to Baghdad once the UN and the Europeans come on board."

The Pioneer, 2 February 2005

EU to give 10 mn euro for Indian tsunami victims

Brussels. The European Commission - the executive arm of the 25-member European Union (EU) - has decided to allocate 10 million euro in humanitarian aid for the Indian victims of the Asian tsunami. Commission sources told INEP in Brussels that the sum allocated will complement Indian authorities' actions in favour of the approximately 400,000 people directly affected by the disaster, through projects implemented by international NGOs. The 10 million euro for India is part of the 80 million euro earmarked for humanitarian aid by the Commission to assist the December 26 tsunami victims in Asia. In India, the EU funds will provide for shelters in semi-permanent camps and distribution of non-food related items such as cooking materials and psychological support to affected families.

Deccan Chronicle, 2 February 2005

Alarm bells toll in Delhi over Nepal

New Delhi Feb.1. The decision by the King of Nepal Gyanendra Singh to dissolve the multi-party government led by Prime Minister Deuba has rung alarm bells in New Delhi with the Cabinet Committee for Security meeting under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to discuss the impact of the developments on the region. India has taken the position that the King has "violated" the principle of multiparty democracy by forming a government under his chairmanship. "These developments constitute a serious setback to democracy in Nepal and cannot but be a cause of concern to India," the External Affairs Ministry stated. The MEA statement has indicated that the King will not enjoy India's support until and unless he restores democracy in Nepal.

The Hindu, 3 February 2005

India yet to decide on military aid (Amit Baruah)

New Delhi, Feb.2. India is yet to make an assessment whether to suspend or not military assistance to Nepal, in the wake of King Gyanendra's action of taking over the reins. The Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, said no contact had been possible with the new regime in Kathmandu and in the absence of information, an assessment could not be made on issues such as military assistance. According to him, the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu was making efforts to get in touch with the officials of the new regime but had not been successful so far.

The Tribune, 4 February 2005

Gharekhan is special envoy for West Asia

New Delhi, Feb.3. Mr Chinmaya R. Gharekhan has been appointed as special envoy for West Asia and the Middle East Peace Process, the Ministry of External Affairs announced today. Mr Gharekhan has had a distinguished diplomatic career, in the course of which he served as India's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, India's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva and as Additional Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office. On retirement in 1992, Mr Gharekhan served as Under Secretary-General in the UN, first as the UN Secretary-General's Personal Representative to the Security Council and then as UN Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories.

Hindustan Times, 4 February 2005

India establishes official contact with Kathmandu

New Delhi, Feb.3. Two days after King Gyanendra seized power in Nepal, India on Thursday established first contact with authorities in Kathmandu and conveyed its grave concern over the developments in the Himalayan Kingdom. India's Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee met new Nepalese Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey in Kathmandu and apprised him of New Delhi's strong views on the King's action. New Delhi has termed the developments as a "serious setback" to the cause of democracy and warned that any direct confrontation between the monarchy and the mainstream political parties would only benefit the forces that not only wish to undermine democracy, but the institution of monarchy as well.

Indian Express, 5 February 2005

Diplomat says India can play major role in rebuilding Iraq

New Delhi, Feb.4. In a show of solidarity, US Ambassador David Mulford and Iraq's new Charge d'Affaires Muyad S Hussein today shared the stage in a joint media interaction after the elections in Iraq. Hussein took the opportunity to seek India's help in the rebuilding of Iraq. "In the new Iraqi scenario, there are lots of opportunities for the Indian business community who can re-establish their old position," said Hussein. On whether Baghdad has made any formal request to India seeking its assistance, he said, "Iraq appreciates the positive stance of the Indian government ... I wish we receive more and more help from it." Hussein also said Iraq would like to learn and share experiences of the Indian democracy, "which is one of the best and most matured democracies in the world."

Hindustan Times, 5 February 2005

Chidambaram urges review of globalisation process (Vijay Dutt)

London, Feb.4. Speaking on "India and Globalisation" at the Foreign Policy Centre at Guildhall in London on Thursday, Finance Minister P Chidambaram, criticised the fact that the terms of engagement in globalisation were heavily tilted in favour of the developed countries. This does not augur well for either globalisation or stability, he warned. India, he said, "willingly embraces the imperative of globalisation" but as of today, "the terms are heavily weighted against developing countries". Millions of people in the developing countries, and in the least developing countries "watch in silence and with a growing sense of bitterness, that the Age of Prosperity is passing by". He urged the Foreign Policy Centre (FPC) - one of the leading European think-tank - to review the process of globalisation and "renew the process by making it more inclusive, more just and more equitable".

The Telegraph, 6 February 2005

Mani spins gold-rush dream with flourish (K.P.Nayar)

Calgary, Feb.5. India is shining in Calgary with petroleum minister Mani Shankar Aiyar predicting here yesterday that his current global effort in oil diplomacy will turn into the "gold rush" of the 21st century. "India is now California 1848," Aiyar told nearly 100 decision-makers in the energy sector in this city, which sits on all of Canada's bitumen and synthetic crude oil output, 81 per cent of this country's natural gas production and 66 per cent of its conventional oil production. Aiyar's drive close on the heels of a visit to New Delhi by Canada's new Prime Minister Paul Martin, has brought to this country an image of India that people here are unfamiliar with. This new image will draw tens of Canadian oil executives to a hotel facility here from Monday. At this facility, electronic work stations have been set up for these executives to access on-line data about investing in India's hydrocarbon sector.

The Tribune, 6 February 2005

Suspected terrorist deported to India after 16 years (Ashish Kumar Sen)

Washington. A suspected Sikh terrorist's 16-year battle to avoid deportation from the USA ended this week when the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers escorted him back to India. Charanjit Singh (43) was found by a federal court to have actively engaged in terrorism, supported terrorists and was linked to two terrorist organisations in India. One of the groups, the Babbar Khalsa, has been designated a terrorist organisation by the State Department. Charanjit Singh also has been linked to the Khalistan Commando Force, which has been identified in attacks against Indian officials. The Bush administration has designated the Babbar Khalsa International and the International Sikh Youth Federation "terrorist organisations for immigration purposes." Charanjit Singh was arrested and placed in deportation proceedings on September 29, 1989, two days after he illegally entered America near El Paso, Texas.

Indian Express, 7 February 2005

Nepal leaders seek refuge in Uttaranchal

Dehra Dun, Feb.6. Fearing arrest following the emergency in Nepal, a former minister and several political leaders have slipped out to neighbouring Uttaranchal to take refuge. Home Minister Shivraj Patil visited Dehra Dun on Sunday night to review the security situation along the Indo-Nepal border. More than 12 leaders of Nepali Congress and Left-wing Nepali Communist Party have crossed over and are putting up with relatives and friends here, especially Pitthoragarh and Banbassa in Champawat and Khatima in Udham Singh Nagar district. Former Education Minister Dilender Budh reached Banbassa soon after emergency was declared. Vinaydwaj Chand, a member of the Central Committee of Nepali Congress, Narender Singh Bisht and Vishnu Dutt Joshi are in Pitthoragarh. Ishwari Kharel, a former mayor and senior Nepali Communist Party leader, along with a dozen students and youth leaders are holed up at Banbassa.

Hindustan Times, 7 February 2005

Lord Paul to quit India-UK Round Table

London, Feb.6. After five years as Co-Chairman of the India-UK Round Table consisting of eminent persons and mandated to promote bilateral ties, NRI industrialist Lord Swraj Paul on Sunday announced his decision to step down from the post, noting that bilateral ties are poised for further consolidation. "Eight meetings are a lot for a Co-Chairman; it is time for me to move on," Lord Paul said in his opening remarks at the eighth meeting of the Round Table at Bolton Abbey in Yorkshire. Adding that he would relinquish the co-chairmanship after submitting the conclusions of the current meeting to the Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, Lord Paul said India-UK bilateral relations are poised for further consolidation and the two-way trade is expected to grow substantially. "The bilateral relations are poised for further consolidation and the changing relationship opens up opportunities for further improvement and ideas."

The Tribune, 7 February 2005

Gas pipeline: Pak, Iran to go ahead without India

Teheran, Feb.6. Iran and Pakistan may not wait for an uncertain India to join a deal to buy Iranian gas via a trans-Pakistan pipeline, Iran's Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs was quoted as saying on Saturday. "Iran and Pakistan are ready to separately sign a deal for Iranian gas exports, as the Indians are still doubting on a pipeline supply via Pakistan," Hadi Nejad-Hosseini said. Talks on setting up a pipeline from Iran to India have still not borne fruit due to territorial conflict between India and Pakistan. Despite repeated assurances from Pakistan, India hesitates to give the go-ahead to the deal.

The Telegraph, 8 February 2005

Aid block urged to corner king (Ashis Chakrabarti)

Kathmandu, Feb. 7: Political parties, human rights activists and other pro-democracy groups have urged the international community to stop military and other assistance to Nepal until King Gyanendra revokes the emergency and restores the rule of law in the country. In a joint statement secretly circulated to foreign correspondents here, spokespersons for 14 human rights and civil society groups have appealed to the United Nations and the donor countries to withhold assistance to put pressure on the king. A spokesman for the Nepali Congress called upon India and the US in particular to stop military assistance to the Royal Nepal Army immediately. Although they are enthused by the first reactions of India, the United States, the UK and the European Union that unambiguously criticised the royal takeover of the government, they want firm action to follow the condemnation.

The Tribune, 8 February 2005

Rao Inderjit Singh to visit Latin America (Rajeev Sharma)

New Delhi, Feb.7. Engaging Latin America seems to be the new mantra of Indian foreign policy. To give a special thrust to the Government of India's policy of focus on Latin America, Minister of State for External Affairs Rao Inderjit Singh will be visiting Honduras, Suriname and Mexico from tomorrow. A novel thing about Mr Singh's 13-day visit is that he would be interacting with foreign ministers and other senior officials of as many as 24 Latin American countries, the minister told The Tribune this evening. He will have a meeting in Honduras on February 10 with the eight Foreign Ministers of Central America namely, Panama, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Belize and Dominican Republic, apart from Honduras.

Hindustan Times, 9 February 2005

Nepal party wants India to review support to Kathmandu

New Delhi, Feb.8. A political party in Nepal on Tuesday asked India to reconsider continuance of military and other support to Kathmandu in the wake of overthrow of democracy and demanded reframing of the country's constitution. Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi) (NSP-A), seeking to reach out to the world from here in view of media censorship and other curbs in the home country, rejected the King's contention that Emergency was declared to address the problem of Maoists and corruption. "India and all other countries providing support to Nepal in military and other areas should see that the aid is not misused by the King," NSP-A General Secretary Rajendra Mahto told in a press conference, as the number of political leaders escaping from Nepal to India continued to swell.

Indian Express, 10 February 2005

Envoy meets King, urges 'removal of all restrictions'

New Delhi, Feb.9. Nine days after he stunned the region by dissolving the Sher Bahadur Deuba Government and taking the reigns of power in his hand, Nepal King Gyanendra today gave a 90-minute audience to the Indian envoy in Kathmandu. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the King met Indian Ambassador Shiv Shanker Mukherjee this evening and explained the reasons for taking the drastic step. India, however, made it clear that it was important to remove "all restrictions" on political leaders imposed since February 1. The Indian envoy urged the King for a return to democratic processes at the earliest. "He emphasised the importance of bringing the political leaders into a broad national consensus to enable Nepal to overcome the political and economic challenges confronting it," the MEA Spokesperson said.

The Hindu, 10 February 2005

Dhaka on track over tri-nation gas pipeline (Haroon Habib)

Dhaka, Feb.9. Bangladesh has not backtracked from the initial negotiations on the planned tri-nation gas pipeline from Myanmar to India through its territory. "The move is continuing. It's not being finalised now," the State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources, A.K.M. Mosharraf Hossain, told UNB news agency, replying to a question whether India's decision not to attend the Dhaka SAARC summit would affect the negotiations. "Let's see what happens in the future. The impact would be considered at the final stage of the agreement," he said, pending a technical committee on the transboundary pipeline for gas export from Myanmar to India. The tri-nation technical committee was proposed to meet in Yangon on February 14 but India suggested Myanmar, the convener, to reschedule the meeting for February 17 and 18, according to a press release by the Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

The Hindu, 11 February 2005

India welcomes Palestine-Israeli summit

New Delhi, Feb.10. India said today that the February 8 Sharm-el-Sheikh summit between the leaders of Israel and Palestine, coming after a gap of about four years, was an important step in the resumption of the West Asian peace process and deserves the support of the international community. "We have noted the encouraging statements of both leaders. However, a number of important issues remain to be addressed," the External Affairs Ministry spokesman said.

Deccan Chronicle, 12 February 2005

Aiyer to ink mega gas deal in June

New Delhi Feb.11. India and Iran will sign an agreement in Teheran in June this year to clear the way for the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipe-line that has assumed the shape of a major confidence building measure between India and Pakistan. The \$4.5 billion project that has been under off and on discussion since 1993 is now all set to become a reality with Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyer conveying India's willingness to "ink" an agreement to Iran envoy Siyavash Zaragar Yaghouti on Friday. The meeting comes on the heels of a Cabinet decision authorising Aiyer to discuss and finalise at least three major gas pipeline projects with Iran and Pakistan, Myanmar and Bangladesh, and Turkmenistan and Afghanistan.

The Hindu, 12 February 2005

IPR agreement between Russia, India in final stages

Chennai, Feb.11. The Russian Ambassador to India, Vyacheslav I. Trubnikov, today said the Intellectual Property Rights agreement between Russia and India to protect sensitive defence and hi-tech information was being finalised. Replying to a query at a press conference here on the process of evolving an umbrella IPR accord between the two countries, which was announced during the Russian President, Vladimir Putin's visit to New Delhi on December 3, he said, "I am happy to say that both the sides are at the final stage of working out this agreement." Mr. Trubnikov said the agreement was important to deal with delicate and sensitive information related to mutually beneficial scientific research work.

The Tribune, 13 February 2005

Military aid to Nepal suspended (Rajeev Sharma)

New Delhi, Feb.12. India has suspended for indefinite period its military aid to Nepal in the wake of the royal coup in the Hindu Kingdom, authoritative sources in the Ministry of External Affairs told The Tribune this evening. External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh today summoned the Indian, Ambassador in Nepal, Mr Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, for consultations. Sources said he would remain here for "several days". The two decisions of the Government of India - of suspension of military aid and summoning of Indian Ambassador in Nepal for consultations - are clear indications that New Delhi is in no mood to relent on its tough stand on King Gyanendra dismissing the Deuba government and usurping all executive powers.

Indian Express, 15 February 2005

India, Italy ink pacts to firm up space ties

New Delhi, Feb.14. India and Italy today signed six bilateral accords, including some involving cooperation on space, science and technology. A high-level Italian delegation accompanying President Azeglio Ciampi signed the accord on space cooperation with ISRO chairman G. Madhavan Nair in the presence of PM Manmohan Singh. Around 92 high technology areas were identified in another agreement outlining a programme of cooperation in science and technology during 2005-07, inked by Secretary at the Department of Science and Technology V.S. Ramamurthy and Italian Ambassador Antonio Armellini. India and Italy will sign several accords to enhance bilateral cooperation in fisheries, preservation of heritage and other areas during Ciampi's five-day state visit.

The Pioneer, 15 February 2005

FDI: Govt lacks clarity, say diplomats

New Delhi. The UPA Government's seemingly aggressive attempts to get foreign investment to the country, directly and indirectly, is being questioned by representatives of the diplomatic community of developed nations here. Diplomats of certain European Union nations who have been asked by their respective governments to identify sectors in India where they can seek engagements in the next fiscal are finding it difficult to file reports back home because they do not know which are the areas where the Centre will like a certain nation to invest either through funds or technical aid, sources in the diplomatic community told The Pioneer on Monday. The sources identify the Ministry of Finance as being thoroughly ambiguous while dealing with representatives of the EU. "We meet Finance Minister P Chidambaram and his officials regularly. But, in the last nine months since the regime changed, no concrete policy directions have been offered by North Bloc," said a senior diplomat.

Deccan Chronicle, 16 February 2005

India, EU to ink pact on Galileo navigation

London, Feb. 15: India will sign an agreement with the European Union's satellite radio navigation programme, Galileo, launched by the grouping jointly with the European Space Agency. Isro Chief G Madhavan Nair will hold talks with European Union leaders in Brussels to finalise the agreement confirming India's participation in the Galileo programme, which would complement the Global Positioning System of the United States. With the signature on the agreement on Galileo, India will become the third country to join the programme launched by the EU, according to a report from Brussels. A decision on India joining the satellite project was taken during the India-EU summit at The Hague last year. China and Israel have already concluded similar agreements.

The Pioneer, 16 February 2005

'India not obliged to supply arms to Nepal'

New Delhi. Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said here on Tuesday that India had no contractual agreement or obligation to supply arms to Nepal and weapons were supplied as and when any requests came from Nepal. Making India's stand clear as regards military help to the Himalayan kingdom, the Defence Minister said any request for weapons was considered and reviewed after taking in view the situation in Nepal. "It is not that we have a running contract with Nepal for arms supplies, the weapons requests are considered as and when they require these," Mr Mukherjee told newsmen after inaugurating the

National Maritime Foundation, a non-government think-tank for analysing and carrying out research on maritime affairs.

The Hindu, 16 February 2005

India's prowess as a donor nation in full view (Amit Baruah)

Kabul, Feb.15. India's growing clout as a donor nation was in full view as the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, held discussions with the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, the Afghan Foreign Minister, Abdullah Abdullah, and other senior Ministers here today. India also handed over 49 Tata trucks valued at Rs. 6 crores, to be used as troop carriers by the Afghan National Army, to the Defence Minister, Abdul Rahim Wardak, at a function organised by the American military, as the U.S. is the coordinating nation to train and equip the ANA. This donation to the ANA is part of a \$400 million package of assistance that has been extended to Afghanistan in the wake of the changes in the country's political landscape post-2001.

Times of India, 17 February 2005

Israeli general on a low-key visit to bolster ties (Rajat Pandit)

New Delhi, Israel has emerged as the second largest military hardware and software supplier to India after Russia but the defence establishment here still goes blue in the face to play down the "special" strategic relationship with the Jewish state. In the latest such incident, chief of staff of the Israeli ground forces command, Brig-General A Mizrahi, arrived in the Capital on Wednesday to further bolster sharing of military intelligence, equipment, joint training and exercises. Though both South Block and Army headquarters were tight-lipped about Mizrahi's "hush-hush" visit, it's yet another indicator that the switch-over from the Vajpayee regime to the Manmohan Singh one has not affected the burgeoning military ties with Israel.

Indian Express, 17 February 2005

Kyoto deal: For clean air, India looks at tech, fund benefits

New Delhi, Feb.16. With the Kyoto Protocol to reduce green house emissions coming into effect from Wednesday, India is hoping to benefit from the pact by getting clean technology and funds from industrialised countries. One of the provisions of the protocol, which India ratified in 2002, is that developing nations like India will not only get new and clean technology to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from developed countries, but also funding for putting such environmental-friendly technology in place. In return, industrialised nations can purchase Certified Emission Reductions (CERs) from India and other developing countries. The pact mandates that developed countries have to cut greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions by an average of 5.2 per cent below their 1990 level by 2012. India, however, has no legal obligation to reduce its greenhouse gas emission.

Hindustan Times, 17 February 2005

India to be invited to G-8 summit: Report

London, Feb.16. British Prime Minister Tony Blair plans to invite key developing industrial powers of India, China and Brazil to the G-8 summit this summer in his attempt to convince the United States to rejoin international efforts to tackle global warming. Downing Street has received positive signals from Washington about the plan, The Times daily reported on Wednesday. Quoting a Downing Street insider, the report said, "America has said that it would not sign up to Kyoto (Protocol) because China and India do not have to make any cuts (under the treaty). It is not going to sign up if its competitors do not. If we can get China and India sitting alongside America, it will help Bush enormously." Blair hopes that China and India, the world's fastest-growing industrial powers, will be joined on the new group by Brazil, representing South America, and South Africa, representing Africa. His plans seem to accept that world leaders simply will not agree to a reduction in living standards or economic prospects in order to achieve post-Kyoto climate change targets.

Deccan Chronicle, 18 February 2005

India leads in CDM projects

New Delhi, Feb.17. India leads the world in terms of the number of projects accorded to it by the CDM (Clean Development Mechanism) Executive Board, as per the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol. So far India has received 54 CDM projects. This was stated here today by the Environment and Forests Minister, A. Raja, delivering the inaugural address at "Clear Skies", a meeting organised by the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Indian Carbon Market Group (ICMG) to mark the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. "The vigorous project development activity in our country, and the proactive stands adopted by the Government, has propelled India to become the most favourable destination for CDM investments," Mr. Raja said, adding that at the national level, India had created an efficient National CDM authority for according approvals.

The Hindu, 19 February 2005

Britain backs India, not veto (Pranay Sharma)

New Delhi, Feb.18. India's strategic partner Britain today made it clear that while it actively supported the Indian candidature for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, Delhi must come in without a veto power. This position was made clear by visiting British foreign secretary Jack Straw this evening. "We favour an expansion of the Security Council to include as permanent members Germany, Japan, Brazil and India," he said while delivering a lecture at the Ficci auditorium on the Indo-British parliamentary forum. But while responding to a question, he made it clear that India and the new members will not have veto powers. "We support option A which clearly states that the new members in the UN Security Council can come in without veto powers," the British foreign secretary said. He argued that if nine new members - as has been proposed by the high panel of the UN on the expansion of the Security Council - enjoy veto powers, it will be a difficult situation to handle.

Deccan Chronicle, 21 February 2005

Indian envoy returns to Kathmandu

New Delhi, Feb.20. Stepping up its efforts to bring normalcy in the Himalayan Kingdom, India has urged King Gyanendra of Nepal through its envoy, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, to immediately restore democracy and release the political prisoners. After having consultations with top government officials and leaders, Mukherjee returned to Kathmandu on Sunday carrying the message for King Gyanendra. Mukherjee said that the government of India was constantly keeping a watch on the developments in Nepal. He also said that the seizure of power by the King has already been described as a setback to democracy by India and now India wants the King to restore the democratic process and release political prisoners without any further delay.

The Tribune, 21 February 2005

Iranian Foreign Minister arrives for talks (Rajeev Sharma)

New Delhi, Feb.20. Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi arrived here this evening on an important three-day visit during which he would participate in the 14th India-Iran Joint Economic Commission, address the India-Iran Joint Business Council meeting and call on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Dr Kharrazi will hold talks with External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh tomorrow noon which will be followed by the opening session of the Joint Economic Commission. The vibrant nature of economic ties between India and Iran can be gauged from the fact that the annual bilateral trade between the two countries has already breached the \$ 3 billion mark.

The Hindu, 21 February 2005

India expresses desire to invest in Yemen's oil sector (Atul Aneja)

Manama, Feb.20 . India has expressed its desire to invest in Yemen's oil and gas sector as part of efforts to improve economic and political ties. The visiting Minister of State for External Affairs, E. Ahamed told the Foreign Minister of Yemen, Abu Bakr Al-Qirbi in Sanaa that the Oil and Natural Gas Commission was willing to participate in Yemen's hydrocarbon sector. Mr. Al Qirbi welcomed the statement. Yemen's oil reserves stand at four billion barrels and daily production averages around 450,000 barrels. India has been investing in overseas oil ventures, including in Russia and Sudan and has stated its desire to enter Iran's hydrocarbon carbon sector in a substantial way.

The Hindu, 22 February 2005

Iran welcomes India's decision on pipeline project

New Delhi, Feb.21. The Iranian Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharrazi, said today that building the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline would be the "best and most desirable step" between Teheran and New Delhi in the field of energy cooperation. Mr. Kharrazi, who held talks with the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, and called on the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, said piped gas, a cheaper option, would attract foreign investment to countries in the region. He claimed that India's decision to go ahead with the gas pipeline project had created an "encouraging atmosphere" for pushing ahead with this "highly important" project. Mr. Kharrazi held detailed discussions with Mr. Singh during the 14th meeting of the India-Iran Joint Commission.

The Pioneer, 23 February 2005

'No military aid to Nepal since emergency'

New Delhi. India has suspended military aid to Nepal since February 1 when King Gyanendra seized power and declared emergency in the country, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) disclosed this on Tuesday. "In view of current disturbed conditions in Nepal, no military supplies have been delivered since February 1," MEA spokesperson Navtej Sarna told reporters while responding to a question. He said the issue of military supplies "has been under continuous review taking into account the evolving situation" in Nepal.

The Tribune, 23 February 2005

Karzai to arrive today

New Delhi, Feb.22. Afghan President Hamid Karzai is arriving here tomorrow with a high-power delegation comprising 11 Cabinet ministers on a three-day working visit. He would hold talks with the top Indian leaders during his visit. President A.P.J Abdul Kalam would host a dinner in honour of Mr Karzai tomorrow while Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would host a lunch for the dignitary which will be preceded by delegation-level talks, foreign office spokesman said today. This would be Mr Karzai's first visit to India since the recent elections in his country.

Deccan Chronicle, 24 February 2005

Karzai to open trade corridor

New Delhi, Feb.23. Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Wednesday pledged to pursue with Pakistan the possibility of establishing a trade corridor to enable Indian exports to reach the war-ravaged country transiting through it. Karzai during talks with External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh said he had taken up this issue with Pakistan and would push it further, External Affairs Ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna said. The two sides "reviewed positively" Indo-Afghan relations. Karzai expressed interest in getting more Indian teachers and doctors to Afghanistan as well as more vocational training. Karzai, who will hold wide-ranging discussions with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Thursday, also sought Indian expertise in establishing a tele-medicine project for Afghanistan which, he said, would be most useful in view of the difficult terrain of that country.

Indian Express, 25 February 2005

Ministry still not so sure of Turkmen gas (Pranab Dhal Samanta)

New Delhi, Feb.24. For all the enthusiasm on the part of the visiting Afghan President Hamid Karzai to get India involved in the

proposed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline, New Delhi is still not convinced on the feasibility of the project. In particular, the Ministry of External Affairs has serious doubts over whether Turkmenistan has sufficient gas reserves to dedicate to this pipeline. It is learnt that the Ministry has suggested a more in-depth assessment of the project, which includes examining in detail the recent report of the Asian Development Bank on the pipeline. South Block officials point out that Turkmenistan's gas production last year was 58 billion cubic metres (BCM), of which 35 BCM was exported to Ukraine and smaller volumes to Iran and Russia.

Hindustan Times, 25 February 2005

Iran okays gas to India through Pak

Tehran, Feb.24. Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi has said that Iran, in principle, has decided to supply gas to India through the pipeline passing via Pakistan. According to The Nation, Kharrazi, while speaking to newsmen after his meeting his visiting Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, said that the gas pipeline project from Iran to India via Pakistan has been given the go ahead. He said that the prospects of gas pipeline project have been discussed in detail and Indian cabinet has also empowered its Energy Minister to work out the modalities of the project, adding that Iranian and Pakistani ministers will meet on March 19 to work out the modalities of the project.

The Hindu, 26 February 2005

Indian aid tremendous: Kadirgamar

New Delhi, Feb.25. The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, today thanked India for the "tremendous assistance in the greatest hour of need" and hoped that India's helping hand during the tsunami would bring the two countries closer. Speaking at a book release function at the Sri Lankan High Commission here, Mr. Kadirgamar said he had come as a special envoy of the Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, to thank India. Stating that the aid and relief work not only demonstrated the closeness of India to Sri Lanka but also its "enormous capacity to bring disaster teams to a spot very quickly," Mr. Kadirgamar said.

Indian Express, 27 February 2005

Bush signs on for clean air in China, India

San Francisco, US President George W. Bush has pledged to help developing nations like China and India cut back on their fast-growing output of the greenhouse gases linked to global warming. Bush signed a pact with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder earlier this week to help poorer countries adopt more energy-efficient technologies in power generation, transportation and industry. Although the pact lacked specific commitments for new spending, analysts say it could help take political pressure off US, the world's largest polluter, and remove a major obstacle to achieving the goals set out in the Kyoto Protocol.

The Telegraph, 27 February 2005

Pushback knell for Monica

New Delhi, Feb.26. Monica Bedi seems to have lost her last chance to prevent being packed off to India to stand trial for passport fraud with a constitutional court in Portugal dismissing her plea against extradition. The court rejected her appeal on Thursday, clearing what the CBI believes is the last major hurdle in bringing her to India. Bedi, the girlfriend of underworld don Abu Salem, is accused of securing a passport from Hyderabad by misrepresenting facts and using forged documents. Bedi has since been under detention pending the extradition cases. Another case that seeks her repatriation for getting another passport from the Bhopal regional passport office is pending before the Lisbon high court. Given the pace at which the Portugal legal system operates, a CBI official said it might be possible to get Bedi to India "sooner than we expected".

Hindustan Times, 28 February 2005

Pak says gas pipeline deal possible by March: Report

Islamabad, Feb.28. Pakistan said on Monday that a multibillion dollar Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline deal was possible by mid-March if New Delhi agreed to join it, Xinhua reported. "The agreement is possible on March 18 if India agrees to join the project," Petroleum Minister Amanullah Khan Jadoon was quoted by Geo Television as saying. Under the plan, natural gas would be transferred from southern Iran via a 1,600-km pipeline to Pakistan and on to India through a 1,000-km line at an estimated cost of \$3.5 billion. Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar will visit Pakistan in March to attend an energy conference of petroleum ministers from seven South Asian countries.