

aHindu, 1 July 2008

For want of papers, Indian freed by Pakistan sent back to jail

ISLAMABAD: Ram Prakash, an Indian released on Tuesday on completion of his 10-year jail term on spying charges, was sent back to prison from the Wagah border because he did not have travel documents to cross into India. The Indian High Commission here said it was unable to provide him the papers as Pakistan had not given information about the release

Indian Express, 6 July 2008

Pak gets Jaipur Foot, India may get helping hand

Jaipur, July 5: The Jaipur Foot has set foot in Karachi, where Pakistan's first permanent Artificial Limb Centre (ALC) was inaugurated yesterday after a 20-day training programme by a four-member team from Jaipur. And, if all goes well, India may soon get an artificial hand from Sialkot. According to D R Mehta, founder president of the Mahavir Vikalang Sahayata Samiti (MVSS) - the creators of the Jaipur Foot, the technology for the artificial upper limb is still in the design stage.

Dawn, 9 July 2008

Kabul blames 'agency' for embassy blast

KABUL, July 8: A suicide bomb attack on the Indian Embassy in the Afghan capital bore all the hallmarks of a foreign intelligence agency, Afghanistan's presidential spokesman said on Tuesday in a likely reference to Pakistan. Afghanistan has accused Pakistani agents of being behind the April assassination attempt against President Hamid Karzai, a mass jail break in Kandahar last month and a string of other attacks. 'Everything has the hallmark of a particular intelligence agency that has conducted similar terrorist acts inside Afghanistan in the past,' Humayun Hamidzada told a news conference a day after the embassy attack that killed 41 people

Hindu, 16 July 2008

India's charge against ISI may figure in talks

ISLAMABAD: India's charge of ISI involvement in the Kabul embassy attack is likely to come up when the Indian and Pakistan Foreign Secretaries meet next week in New Delhi to open the fifth round of the composite dialogue process. Earlier this week, National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan said India had 'pretty good evidence' to link the ISI to the Kabul bombing in which four Indians were among 60 killed

Daily Excelsior, 17 July 2008

Weekly bus service between Srinagar-Muzaffarabad soon

SRINAGAR, July 15: A weekly bus service between Srinagar and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) has been under active consideration of the Government, Regional Passport Officer (RPO) B Manavalan said. Participating in the DD-live programme here, Mr Manavalan said at present, there were five points - three in Kashmir valley and two in the Jammu region - from where people from the State and PoK crossed sides. Two points were connected by road, while at three places, people had to cross on foot, he said

Daily Excelsior, 17 July 2008

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Hindu, 18 July 2008

India, Pakistan talks today

ISLAMABAD: India and Pakistan will meet on Friday for talks to facilitate trade and travel across the Line of Control, days after New Delhi accused Pakistan's ISI of involvement in the Indian embassy blast in Kabul. A team of eight Indian officials, led by Ministry of External Affairs Joint Secretary T.C.A. Raghavan, arrived here on Thursday for the talks. The Pakistan side will be led by Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhary, Director-General, South Asia, in the Pakistan Foreign Office. The technical working group is to examine ways to simplify procedures for travel on the cross-LoC bus services. Two bus services operate across the LoC: between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, and between Poonch and Rawalakot. At present, it can take anywhere between two and four years for a prospective passenger to get travel clearance

Dawn, 18 July 2008

Most Pakistanis, Indians flexible on Kashmir: Opinion poll in subcontinent

NEW DELHI, July 17: People in India and Pakistan show a readiness to let the disputed region of Kashmir decide its own fate, and many will tolerate independence if that ended the long-running dispute, a rare poll on the crisis shows. A survey by the WorldPublicOpinion.org asked Indian and Pakistanis to consider a range of possible outcomes for the Kashmir question and to say whether they found them desirable, acceptable, tolerable, or unacceptable. A majority of those surveyed would find independence at least tolerable if Kashmiris wanted it

Hindu, 18 July 2008

India, Pakistan agree on Kashmir-specific CBMs

ISLAMABAD: Indian and Pakistani officials are said to have arrived at a 'number of decisions' on new and existing Kashmir-specific confidence building measures, including a proposed triple-entry permit for cross-Line of Control travel, at the talks held here on Friday. 'They have arrived at a number of decisions, all related to the modalities for implementing what was decided by the [Indian and Pakistani] Foreign Ministers at their May 21 meeting,' said an official. The two sides are said to have discussed the introduction of a triple-entry permit for cross-LoC travel, simplification of the procedures for getting the permit which at present takes at least two years, and an increase in the frequency of the two bus services across the LoC

Hindu, 18 July 2008

Positive news on positive list

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has allowed the import of compressed natural gas (CNG) buses from India under its trade policy for 2008-09. The import of CNG buses has been allowed along with that of 135 other items that have been added to the positive list for imports from India in the policy announced on Friday by Commerce Minister Chaudhary Ahmed Mukhtar. With this, the number of items that the government permits for import from India goes up to nearly 2,000

Hindu, 19 July 2008

Pakistan to import buses, books from India

Islamabad: Pakistan has allowed the import of CNG buses, books for academic and scientific research, diesel and fuel oil from India under its trade policy for 2008-2009

announced on Friday. It has also allowed the import of paddy harvesting machinery and driers, which can be sent in by road through the Wagah border. Cotton yarn and stainless steel that were being sent by train can now be sent by road too.

Asian Age, 19 July 2008

Pak, India agree to ease visa curbs

July 19: Pakistan and India have agreed to ease visa restrictions and people-to-people contact. According to a joint statement issued after a bilateral meeting here on Friday, the two sides discussed modalities for implementation of the decisions taken by the ministerial meeting of May 21 on cross-LoC travel and trade. The working group of Pakistan and India met to discuss measures to facilitate travel and trade across the LoC in the divided state of Jammu Kashmir. Foreign ministry director-general for South Asia Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry headed the Pakistan side while external affairs joint secretary T.C.A. Raghvan led the Indian side during the day-long meeting. "Both the sides had constructive discussion on host of issues, including launching of truck service, operational of inter-Kashmir bus service on a weekly basis and opening of the crossing point and easing of visa curbs," the statement said

Daily Times, 20 July 2008

EDITORIAL: More trade with India is good

The commerce minister, Mr Ahmad Mukhtar, on Friday crossed one big psychological barrier when he announced Pakistan's Trade Policy 2008-09: he set aside all the so-called 'reasons of the state' of the past not to trade with India with new targets for increased trade with India. The 'directional change', welcomed by Lahore's traditionally conservative Chamber of Commerce and Industry, will clearly go in favour of Indian imports into Pakistan, but it will 'substitute' imports from other more expensive sources to the tune of \$2.8 billion. The 136 items added to the tradable items brings the total to nearly 2000. When we began trading with India under General Zia-ul Haq, this list was just 40

Hindu, 20 July 2008

Holding a mirror to prisoners' issue

ISLAMABAD: India and Pakistan talk a lot about people-to-people contact, but the manner in which the two states themselves deal with each other's nationals is easily the worst aspect of their troubled relationship. Nowhere is this more evident than the way in which Indian and Pakistani prisoners in jails of the other country are treated. Many are held for years for minor or even accidental offences and large numbers end up spending years beyond the sentence handed out to them. Now for the first time, a young Pakistani film-maker has depicted this inhumanity on the big screen. 'Ramchand Pakistani,' a film by Mehreen Jabbar, is also the first by a woman director in this country. It will be released here on August 1 and in India on August 22

Hindu, 21 July 2008

Amidst peace talks, LoC truce disintegrates

NEW DELHI: Even as India and Pakistan have reported progress in their ongoing dialogue on Jammu and Kashmir, the 2003 Line of Control ceasefire, the keystone that holds up the détente process, is beginning to disintegrate. Indian troops reported three attacks on forward positions on Thursday, the latest in over a dozen clashes this year that ruptured a ceasefire that went into place along the Line of Control in 2003. The clashes took place less than 24 hours before bureaucrats from both countries met to discuss cross-LoC confidence-building measures

Hindu, 22 July 2008

Menon says dialogue process is under strain

NEW DELHI: Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon on Monday said the ongoing investigations into the recent Kabul embassy blast had revealed the hand of 'elements in Pakistan.' Speaking to newsmen after meeting his Pakistani counterpart Salman Bashir here, Mr. Menon said the dialogue process had come 'under strain' because in the 'recent past several events have vitiated ties' and some of the leaders in Pakistan had reverted to the 'old polemics.' 'This sequence of events culminated in July 7 [Kabul embassy blast]. All our information in the ongoing investigation, which still has to continue, points to elements in Pakistan behind the blast.' He described the ceasefire as 'under stress' but both sides agreed that it must be 'maintained and continued.'

Hindu, 22 July 2008

Pakistan takes exception to Narayanan's comments

New Delhi: Pakistan on Monday took exception to comments by National security Adviser M.K. Narayanan that ISI was involved in the attack on Indian embassy in Kabul, saying the 'blame-game' should be avoided. It brought 'disquiet for us,' Pakistan Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir told reporters here. 'It is imperative to refrain from blame-game. We have played it for too long,' he said, adding it was important for both the countries to voice their concerns directly rather than publicly

Daily Times, 22 July 2008

Pakistan, India announce more Kashmir CBMs

NEW DELHI: Despite a 'chill' in talks owing to India accusing Pakistan of involvement in the bombing at its Kabul embassy, both countries on Monday announced a series of Kashmir-related confidence building measures (CBMs). Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon and his Pakistani counterpart Salman Bashir announced the cross-border CBMs at separate press conferences after holding talks and initiating the fifth round of the composite dialogue. The two sides agreed upon these measures during a meeting of the Pak-India Working Group in Islamabad last Friday

Daily Times, 22 July 2008

Editorial: Misplaced fear over Pak-India trade

Some misguided people have dubbed the Trade Policy 2008-09 as 'India specific'. This has given rise to some one-sided articles in the national press. Conservative opinion wishes to retain the hostile status quo even though a majority of Pakistanis clearly think otherwise and support the peace process. A couple of Urdu column-writers have appeared on TV to say that it would be 'dangerous' to make Pakistan 'dependent' on Indian imports of crucial raw materials as long as New Delhi is conspiring against Pakistan in Afghanistan and secretly interfering in Balochistan. In this context, a reference is being made once again to the fate of the trade gap between the two countries. Indian exports to Pakistan are worth \$1.8 billion while Pakistani exports to India are worth only \$350 million. The reason for this is India's restrictive tariff regime which, it says, applies to the entire world and is not Pakistan-specific. But the latest 'concession' made to India in the trade policy through enlarging the list of importable items by the PPP government is bound to exacerbate the already skewed trade balance. According to the critics, this will bring Pakistan in a relationship of further 'inequality' with India. With the addition of more importable items, India's exports to Pakistan are supposed to rise to \$4 billion

Hindu, 23 July 2008

Editorial: Dialogue continues despite strain

Even though the process of détente between India and Pakistan has come under strain, the fifth round of the composite dialogue got under way with the Foreign Secretary-level talks on July 21. The possibility of a slide back to the days of acrimony arose after New Delhi accused elements in the neighbouring country of involvement in the July 7 bomb attack on Indian embassy in Kabul. In refuting the allegation, Islamabad has cautioned that instead of playing the blame game, there should be recourse to the joint mechanism set up to deal with the issue of terrorism. There is merit in its argument that the mechanism should be improved and not abandoned if it is found to be not working as desired

Hindu, 23 July 2008

Tension on LoC after cease-fire violations; *LeT ultra held on infiltration

JAMMU, July 22: For the last four and a half years cease-fire on Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB) was holding successfully barring minor incidents of inadvertent firing. Things have, however, sharply changed for the last one and a half month with tension building on both sides of LoC in twin border districts of Poonch and Rajouri. "Firing of rockets is definitely a major incident though we are downplaying it for the sake of cease-fire. Troops have suffered a number of casualties, both fatal and non-fatal on LoC during last two months but we have been keeping the incidents in low profile except for lodging formal protests with Pakistan commanders in the flag meetings. However, the assurances held out in the flag meetings are not being adhered to and firing from Pakistan side is taking place again and again", Army sources said

Dawn, 23 July 2008

Pakistan objects to India nuclear accord

VIENNA, July 23: Pakistan has warned that a deal leading to increased Indian access to nuclear fuel could accelerate the atomic arms race in the subcontinent, according to a letter obtained on Wednesday by The Associated Press. The letter addressed to more than 60 nations comes less than two weeks before the 35-nation International Atomic Energy Agency board is expected to approve a so-called safeguards agreement setting up rules for inspecting some of India's civilian nuclear facilities. Approval of the safeguards deal is key to India's efforts to gain access to legal imports of nuclear fuel and technology from a 45-nation consortium known as the Nuclear Suppliers Group

Hindu, 24 July 2008

LoC skirmish claims soldier's life

NEW DELHI: Pakistan-based jihadists launched fresh assaults on Indian forward positions along the Line of Control over the weekend, leading to skirmishes which have claimed the life of at least one soldier. BSF head constable Bhanwar Lal was killed at Mukhiari Post in the Rajouri sector on Tuesday morning, after the position was attacked by jihadists armed with rocket launchers, under-barrel grenade-launchers and automatic rifles

Hindu, 24 July 2008

IAEA safeguards grant India nuclear weapons status: Pakistan

New Delhi: In a four-page letter addressed to Board members of the IAEA, Pakistan has attacked the draft Indian safeguards agreement for envisaging termination conditions and fuel supply arrangements which could allow India to 'divert part of [any imported] fuel for weapons purposes.' At the same time, it said that the Indian model should not be 'discriminatory' and should be applied to states such as itself. Pakistan is a member of the 35-strong Board of Governors. The letter, written by its

Ambassador to the IAEA, Shahbaz, was sent out on July 18, though the Indian mission in Vienna has yet to formally receive a copy. A similar letter was circulated by Pakistan's Ambassador to the U.N., Munir Akram, on July 15. The BoG will meet August 1 to consider the Indian agreement

Tribune, 26 July 2008

Srinagar-Muzaffarabad Bus: Team reviews arrangements for weekly service

Srinagar-Muzaffarabad Bus: Team reviews arrangements for weekly service in Srinagar, July 25: A high-level team of officers yesterday visited Uri-Kaman post stretch of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road to review arrangements for the proposed weekly bus service and commencement of truck services across the LoC from next month. The fortnightly bus service, 'Caravan-e-Aman', has been operational for the divided families on either side of the LoC since April 7, 2005, while steps to increase the frequency of bus service to weekly and beginning of trade along the route have so far been faced with several hiccups

Hindu, 27 July 2008

Pakistan troops open fire

Jammu: Pakistani troops fired heavily at the Indian forces at a forward post in Krishna Ghatti sector in Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday, a defence spokesman said here. However, the Indian troops exercised restraint and did not retaliate, Lieutenant Colonel S.D. Goswami told PTI. Giving details, the spokesman said some unidentified ultras fired about three rounds of Rocket Propelled Gun at the Indian post in Nagri Tekri area of Krishna Ghatti sector of Poonch district this morning

Indian Express, 29 July 2008

Jawan shot dead by Pak troops in what Army says is first LoC incursion after Kargil

NEW DELHI, SRINAGAR, JULY 28: In the first incursion on the Line of Control after the 1999 Kargil war, a group of 10-12 Pakistani soldiers, holding a white flag, crossed into Kupwara and shot dead an Indian jawan this afternoon after an argument over an Indian counter-insurgency surveillance post. While there have been a series of cross-border firing incidents in the past few weeks, including an episode on June 19 that left four Pakistani soldiers dead, this is the first time that troops came more than 100 metres into Indian territory and opened fire at an Army post

Daily Excelsior, 29 July 2008

Army says Pak troops crossed LoC in Nowgam

SRINAGAR, July 28: At least one soldier of 22-Rajput has got killed in a fierce gunbattle as Defence authorities claimed that Pakistani troops violated the November 2003 ceasefire between India and Pakistan with crossing over to the Indian side on the LoC. Defence spokesman at headquarters 15 Corps, Col A K Mathur, told EXCELSIOR that the Indian Army noticed the movement of a group of 10 to 12 Pakistani soldiers at Kayian Bal in Leepa Valley at 1530 hours today. According to him, Pakistani soldiers crossed the LoC and opened fire when they were challenged to halt. He said that one Indian soldier, identified as Sepoy Mahesh, got killed. He said that the Indian troops retaliated and forced the Pakistani soldiers retreat. "Fierce gunbattle is going on as troops from both sides are using light combat weapons", Col Mathur said

Daily Excelsior, 29 July 2008

Weekly crossing arrangements reviewed

POONCH, July 28: In view of the decision of the Indian and Pakistani Governments to change periodicity of opening of Chakkan-da-Bagh LoC point here from fortnightly to weekly, Director General of Police Kuldeep Khoda and Principal Secretary Home, Anil Goswami visited the LoC point which witnessed the crossing of 204 passengers today. Accompanied by Deputy Commissioner, Mohd Afzal Bhat, SSP Basant Kumar Rath and other officials of the intelligence agencies and Army, Mr Khoda and Mr Goswami arrived the township of Poonch from Srinagar and then straightway proceeded towards the Chakkan-da-Bagh Line of Control point which is hardly 12 kms from the town

Dawn, 29 July 2008

Pakistan undecided about seeking IAEA vote on Indian deal

ISLAMABAD, July 28: Because of immense US pressure, Pakistan has still not decided whether to press for a vote on the India-specific IAEA safeguards agreement when the UN nuclear watchdog's board of governors meets on Friday. 'For us, national security is supreme and the government will do everything in its power to defend it,' Foreign Office spokesman Mohammad Sadiq said at his weekly press briefing without saying anything about Pakistan's preparation for dealing with the issue at the IAEA board meeting. An approval of the proposed safeguards agreement by the IAEA will be a decisive step in the completion of the India-US nuclear deal

Hindu, 30 July 2008

Editorial: Arrest this negative trend

India and Pakistan have wisely decided not to make too much of the flare-up on the Line of Control, although they have put out contradictory versions of the incident. In allowing the problem to be sorted out at the battalion commander level, the two sides signalled that they wished to treat it as a disturbance in a confined area. The Directors General of Military Operations of the two armies have also been in touch on a hotline in an effort to keep the situation under control. That said, there is clearly a need for Islamabad and New Delhi to put in greater efforts to arrest this negative trend. A ceasefire that has held quite well for over four years has been allegedly violated on at least 19 occasions since January 2008. In Islamabad's version, the clashes occurred mainly because Indian army units have built new forward observation posts in a display of aggressive intent. If this is the case, a clear demarcation of positions held at the time the ceasefire was instituted could reduce the chances of intentions being misconstrued. According to New Delhi, on most occasions Pakistani troops opened fire to facilitate infiltration by militant groups. This version needs to be treated as credible because there were provocative actions of this sort on a fairly regular basis before the ceasefire was put in place. A few months ago, there was even a case of mistaken identity: Pakistani soldiers were killed by a militant group driven back from the Indian side

Hindu, 30 July 2008

Skirmish ends on LoC, flag meeting held

NOWGAM SECTOR: The skirmish between Indian and Pakistani troops on the Line of Control (LoC) ended on Tuesday and was followed by a flag meeting between the two sides to discuss the issue of violation of ceasefire. Even as no journalist was allowed to visit the area beyond a check-post here, reports said that the situation along the LoC was still tense after Monday's incident of Pakistani soldiers sneaking into this side and resulting in heavy gunfight. 'You do not have permission to go ahead. You should get permission from the Ministry of Defence, Delhi,' an Army officer curtly told the journalists

Tribune, 30 July 2008

Pak army forms border teams to boost infiltration

Jammu, July 29 The increase in the cross-border ceasefire violations by the Pakistani troops is well-knit tactic to keep the Indian Army occupied and to push in maximum number of infiltrators from across the border. According to intelligence inputs, the Pakistan army has constituted border area teams (BAT) consisting of specially trained soldiers to further facilitate the cross-border infiltration of trained militants, reveal intelligence inputs. 'These teams consist of 10 to 15 specially trained soldiers who have been assigned the job to attack an isolated Indian post on the border and inflict maximum damage to it,' an intelligence source informed The Tribune

Hindu, 31 July 2008

Firing again on Line of Control

NEW DELHI: Fresh firing has been reported on the Line of Control in northern Kashmir, less than 24 hours after Indian and Pakistani commanders met in an effort to end clashes that threaten to undermine a ceasefire that has held since 2003. Army sources said six mortar shells were fired at the Keryan Post, in the Nowgam sector, early on Wednesday morning. Manned by troops of 16 Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry, the Keryan Post falls under the command of the Kupwara-based 19 Infantry Division, a formation responsible for defending one of the most sensitive, infiltration-besieged stretches of the LoC

Hindu, 31 July 2008

Pakistan will not press for vote on Indian deal at IAEA

Vienna: After firing a written salvo against the draft Indian safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, Pakistan has backed off and is all set to join the consensus in favour of approving the text when the nuclear watchdog's Board of Governors meets on August 1. According to IAEA sources, Pakistan has assured the United States that it will not seek to block approval of the Indian safeguards agreement or call for amendments. Provided Islamabad sticks to its assurances, the August 1 meeting is likely to be a tame affair, though a number of countries are expected to make statements putting on record any misgivings they might have about the deal

Tribune, 31 July 2008

'Need to strengthen Indus Water Treaty'

Srinagar, July 30 Governor N.N. Vohra today called for strengthening the Indus Water Treaty, making it even more beneficial for the people of two countries. In an hour-long interaction with a three-member Pak delegation led by Syed Jamat Ali Shah, Commissioner of Indus Water, Pakistan, here this morning, Vohra said while the people of Kashmir should gain the maximum benefit of water harnessing, those of Pakistan would need to be assured that their interests were not being jeopardised. He said optimum harnessing of the hydel potential of Jammu and Kashmir for generating power would lead to prosperity of the common masses and usher in overall development of the region

Tribune, 31 July 2008

Pak team inspects Baglihar project

Udhampur, July 30 Although India has accepted the recommendations of Prof Raymond Lafittee, a neutral expert appointed by the World Bank, a team of experts from Pakistan today inspected the 450-MW Baglihar hydroelectric project under construction on the Chenab in Ramban district. Pakistan has raised some objections over this project following which the World Bank had appointed a neutral expert to

look into the matter. A three-member team of Pakistani experts, headed by Sayeed Jamat Ali Shah, inspected the dam as well as its reservoir and took measurements at Chanderkote in Ramban district. "During their visit in 2005 the Pakistani team had raised some objections about the height of the dam as well as the reservoir. The team especially visited these spots today ", the Power Development Corporation (PDC) MD Shantmanu, who is accompanying the Indian team, said

Indian Express, 31 July 2008

Lines to regain control (C. Raja Mohan)

As Prime Minister Manmohan Singh meets his Pakistani counterpart, Yousuf Raza Gilani, this weekend on the sidelines of the SAARC summit at Colombo, India faces the unprecedented challenge of coping with an unstable Pakistan. India is quite used to frequent and intense hostility from Pakistan. But it is not often that India has had to deal with a Pakistan that is so at odds with itself. New Delhi must now find ways to engage a Pakistan that speaks in many voices and sends conflicting signals