

Times of India, 1 May 2008

Attack on Indian cabbie in Oz triggers protests

MELBOURNE: Traffic has been disrupted in Melbourne since last evening, following strong protests from nearly one thousand taxi drivers demanding safety, after a 23-year-old Indian part-time taxi driver was stabbed several times by a miscreant in the wee hours of Tuesday morning. At times standoffs emerged between the protesting taxi drivers and the Police, even as cops were seen dragging them away. Jalvinder Singh, the stabbed taxi driver, has been declared out of danger at Royal Melbourne Hospital after his condition improved. A man charged with his attempted murder appeared in Melbourne Magistrates Court on Wednesday.

The Hindu, 2 May 2008

India favours democratic republic for Nepal: Yechury

Kathmandu (PTI) Senior CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury, who played a key role in bringing the Nepal Maoists into mainstream politics, has said India favours the consolidation of the process for the formation of a democratic republic through drafting of a new constitution for the country at the earliest. Yechury, who is in Nepal on a two-day visit, expressed confidence that all issues, including the formation of a new government and drafting of a new constitution will be resolved through consensual approach. We basically came here to express our congratulation and best wishes in their efforts to consolidate the process for the formation of a democratic republic, he told PTI after meeting Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and CPN-Maoist chairman Prachanda on Friday.

Asian Age, 2 May 2008

South Asia still dangerous area for journalists

New Delhi, May 1: South Asia continues to remain a dangerous area for journalists to work in, especially in countries with serious internal conflict like Afghanistan and Sri Lanka while in India though the press freedom is good, there are challenges of media concentration in the hands of a few. These were among the various details given in the sixth annual South Asia Press Freedom Report, produced by the International Federation of Journalists for the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSN) and released on Wednesday ahead of World Press Freedom Day on May 3.

Times of India, 2 May 2008

Indian-origin banker held for scam in UK

LONDON: The police have arrested and charged an Indian-origin employee of HSBC bank in London for an attempted fraud worth nearly 70 million pounds. The attempt by Jagmeet Channa, 25, was discovered last week at HSBC securities services division, which settles trades for clients. A payment to a bank reportedly raised suspicions at the division in HSBC head office building at Canary Wharf and the police were called. A police spokeswoman said Channa, from Ilford in Essex, was charged on April 25 with conspiracy to defraud, money laundering and abusing a position of trust.

The Hindu, 3 May 2008

45 Sri Lankan fishermen arrested in Indian waters

RAMANATHAPURAM: Forty five fishermen of Sri Lanka, who came in fishing trawlers, were apprehended by Coast Guard for entering the Exclusive Economic Zone of Indian waters. Commandant K. Janardhanan, Commanding Officer, Coast Guard Station, Mandapam, told The Hindu that a Coast Guard ship on routine offshore patrol found a flotilla of trawlers moving 116 nautical miles off Chennai on April 27. The fishing boats, fitted with advanced navigational aids, were engaged in illegal exploitation of maritime resources deep inside the Indian waters. They did not have any valid documents.

Hindustan Times, 3 May 2008

It takes three to tango

A regime change in the United States by the end of the year presents an opportunity for India and Iran. Though a lot depends on events, a future occupant of the White House is likely to show more diplomatic dexterity when it comes to dealing with Tehran. After years of shunning North Korea, and repudiating Bill Clinton policies, President George W. Bush had to engage Pyongyang in a bid to resolve the nuclear issue. Iran may be a different cup of tea, but a Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton or even a John McCain is unlikely to do a Bush on Tehran.

The Hindu, 4 May 2008

India, Malaysia hold naval exercise

SINGAPORE: India and Malaysia on Saturday took their increasing defence cooperation a step forward by holding a naval exercise that involved targeted live firing. This marked a scale-up of the regular passage exercise. Two India-built missile corvettes, INS Kora and INS Kirpan, were joined by Malaysian corvettes, KD Amin and KD Nadim, in the passage exercise. With that, the Indian vessels completed their five-day goodwill visit, the other highlight of which was the professional interaction with the Malaysian Navy at its Lumut base in Perak State. The two sides also carried out a simulated exercise at the base.

The Hindu, 4 May 2008

India agrees to release Sri Lankan fishermen

Colombo (PTI): India on Saturday agreed to release the 60 Sri Lankan fishermen who were detained last month for violating a two month fishing ban imposed by the country in Indian waters. The decision of the Indian government to release the fishermen was conveyed to the Deputy High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in Chennai PM Amza, a foreign ministry official told PTI here. The Indian authorities have agreed to release the fishermen and it will take some time to get them back as they would have to undergo some formalities, the official said. While 15 Lankan fishermen were held in Chennai, as many as 45 were arrested in Ramanathapuram. The fishermen and their trawlers had been taken to Mandapam Coast Guard station near Rameswaram for enquiry.

Hindustan Times, 4 May 2008

Three NRIs charged with immigration related offenses in the UK

Three NRIs, including two women, have been charged with immigration related offences in London, the Metropolitan Police said on Saturday. Jatinder Kumar Sharma, 43, was charged with obtaining leave to remain in Britain by deception and possessing a false

identity document. Neelam Sharma, 37, was charged with assisting unlawful entry, whereas, Rakhi Shahi, 30, was charged with obtaining leave to remain in UK by deception.

Times of India, 4 May 2008

India, Canada to discuss FTA during Kamal Nath visit

OTTAWA: India will hold discussion on Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Canada during Union Commerce Minister Kamal Nath visit to that country next month. Indian High Commissioner to Canada R L Narayan announced this, saying that this would be first high level discussion on this issue. He said that both countries had already concluded foreign investment protection and promotion agreement last summer. An expert committee of Canadian Council of Chief Executive Officers and CII, set up last year to evolve strategies to strengthen bilateral relations including free trade agreement, would soon finalise its report, he said.

Indian Express, 4 May 2008

Antony blasts Navy for pulling off last-minute USS Cole surprise

NEW DELHI, MAY 3: Cautious not to give the slightest impression of any alliance building by India, Defence Minister A K Antony has pulled up the Navy for not giving details well in advance about the presence of USS Cole in the recently concluded Indo-UK naval exercises. Antony, sources said, was upset with the Navy for holding back such information till the last minute when clearances were needed. The Indo-UK Konkan exercises were held from April 21 to May 2 in which USS Cole and French stealth ship FS Surcouf participated as observers.

The Hindu, 5 May 2008

India sends two naval ships carrying relief to storm-hit Myanmar

New Delhi (PTI): India is sending two naval ships with relief and medical supplies to Myanmar where a severe cyclone claimed over 3,000 lives and rendered many more homeless. The ships carrying food items, tents, blankets, clothing and medicines will sail to Yangon from Port Blair, the External Affairs Ministry announced here. President Pratibha Patil, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee have sent messages of condolence, expressing their deep distress at the devastation caused by the natural disaster.

Hindustan Times, 5 May 2008

300 Indian workers stranded in Kuwait without job

About 300 Indian workers, hired by a Kuwait contracting company, have alleged that have not been given any job since their arrival in the country four months ago and demanded stern action against unscrupulous agents who allegedly duped them. The Indian workers, who were recruited to work for an oil company, claimed that they have not been issued passes to enter oil installations and that the visas of many workers have expired.

Indian Express, 5 May 2008

Tibetan outfit in India has al Qaeda links: China

As the talks between the Dalai Lama envoys and China failed to yield a breakthrough,

Beijing on Monday intensified its attack on the monk accusing him of committing monstrous crimes and fraud and alleged that a Tibetan outfit based in India had links with terror group al-Qaeda. The Dalai Lama's two envoys Lodi Gyari and Kelsang Gyaltsen returned to India from talks in Shenzhen with nothing more than an assurance from Beijing to hold the next round of dialogue at an appropriate time. At the meeting, the first after the unrest erupted in Tibet posing the most serious challenge to Beijing in the last two decades, China did some tough talking asking the Dalai Lama to make credible moves to stop violence and not to sabotage the Beijing Olympics to create conditions for the next round of parleys.

<http://www.ipcs.org/ipcs/ipcsNewsReportsIndia.main.jsp>, 13 May 2008

IISc. helps raise missiles range

Bangalore: Missiles such as the Agni that was test-fired last week could receive a bigger boost to their range thanks to a technological innovation by scientists at the Indian Institute of Science. By coating the nose of the missile with a layer of chromium, scientists at the Department of Aerospace Engineering and Department of Inorganic and Physical Chemistry have demonstrated how the missile's range could be increased by 30 per cent 'without any increase in fuel expenditure. The chromium coating reduces the aerodynamic drag encountered by the vehicle by up to 47 per cent, said K.P.J. Reddy from the Department of Aerospace Engineering. He led the team of scientists in this project. He said: 'As the chromium coating evaporates with the enormous frictional heat generated during hypersonic flight, it reacts with the oxygen atoms present in the atmosphere and produces chromium oxide. This reaction is exothermic, that is producing more heat, thereby decreasing the density of the air around the nose of the missile. As the pressure reduces, so does the drag force, which in turn enables the missile to increase its range.' While the nose of the missile is conventionally blunted in order to reduce the problem of heating, this increases drag, which considerably reduces the range. 'Large amounts of fuel are needed to compensate for the drag and to give the vehicle thrust. With this technology, we increase the range without using additional fuel.'

<http://www.ipcs.org/ipcs/ipcsNewsReportsIndia.main.jsp>, 13 May 2008

Pakistan plunges into political uncertainty

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan was plunged into political uncertainty on Monday after the former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, announced that his party was pulling out of the Federal Cabinet following differences with the Pakistan People's Party over the reinstatement of judges sacked by President Pervez Musharraf last year. Mr. Sharif said the Pakistan Muslim League (N) was driven to this decision by the ruling coalition's failure to reinstate the judges as promised through a resolution in the National Assembly on May 12. "Our Ministers will meet the Prime Minister tomorrow [Tuesday] and submit their resignations," Mr. Sharif said, after three days of talks in London between him and PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari on the issue ended in a deadlock. Indicating the difficulties in breaking away within just three months of the election that brought democratic political parties into office, the PML(N) leader said his party would remain in the ruling coalition and provide outside support to the government on an "issue to issue" basis. The PPP dismissed speculation that the ruling coalition was coming apart. In a statement, spokesman Farahtullah Babar said the ministries vacated by the PML(N)

would not be filled, except for the Finance portfolio because the Ministry needed direction for the upcoming budget session of Parliament. Mr. Babar said: 'The course of dialogue will be pursued to resolve the issue amicably and in a spirit of accommodation and mutual trust.' The PPP has also decided to stay on in the PML(N)-led Punjab government. Describing the decision by the PML(N) as 'only a pause in the process and not a break in the purpose of restoration of judges and strengthening the Parliament', Mr. Babar said there was no disagreement on the reinstatement of the judges, but only on the modalities. However, the PPP appeared to be preparing for a possible break-up of the coalition by reaching out to the Pakistan Muslim League (Q).

<http://www.hindu.com/2008/05/14/stories/2008051459541200.htm>, 14 May 2008

India, UAE consider shoring up military ties

DUBAI: India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have taken a fresh look at shoring up their military ties as part of their effort to substantiate a multifaceted relationship. The visiting Minister of External Affairs, Pranab Mukherjee, held detailed discussions on Tuesday with Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and the Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE armed forces. Diplomatic sources said that the talks explored ways to establish a 'long-term' defence relationship based on possible joint development and manufacture of sophisticated military hardware in the future. Analysts say that discussions on the development of hardware are a step forward in efforts to streamline the military relationship, which so far has been dominated by naval ship visits and training exchange programmes. Mr. Mukherjee's visit also focused on ways to regularise interaction at the official and political level. India's ambassador to the UAE Talmiz Ahmad said at a press conference on Tuesday that Foreign Office consultations, which will review major political developments at the bilateral and regional level, are now expected to be held annually. Special emphasis will also be laid on having regular meetings of the India-UAE Joint Commission that would take stock of the economic relationship at a macro-level. The India-GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) dialogue that is held annually on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) will now be held in a GCC country or in New Delhi alternatively. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait and Oman comprise the GCC. 'We hope that all these efforts would eventually result in a structured collective security dialogue at a regional level,' Mr. Ahmad said. Heavy investments Keen to deepen economic ties, the emirate of Dubai plans to make heavy investments in India. At a presentation by the Dubai Executive Council the apex body that steers the economy, specific companies which were represented shared their vision of engaging with India. The Dubai Ports World, which manages ports in key locations across the globe plans to raise its investment in India from the current \$2.4 billion to \$15 billion in the next five years. The Real Estate giant Limitless proposed an investment of \$12 billion with DLF in the Bidadi township near Bangalore. The government owned conglomerate, Dubai Holding, plans to invest in roads, bridges and telecommunications. Sources pointed out that a 'critical mass' was now being created which will not only result in UAE's investments in India, but also in equal measure, India's investments in its Gulf neighbourhood. While the Gulf will remain a major energy provider, India on its part wished to add value to its partnership in the oil and gas sector. Mr. Mukherjee said during an address to business leaders on Tuesday that the UAE could invest in 'the entire value chain for petroleum, including refining, product

pipelines, storage and retail as well as for natural gas.'

<http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/000200805190339.htm>, 19 May 2008

13 killed, 22 injured in Pak. suicide bomb blast

13 killed, 22 injured in Pak. suicide bomb blast Islamabad (PTI): Thirteen people were killed and 22 injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up in a crowded market within the cantonment area in the northwestern Pakistani city of Mardan on Sunday. The blast occurred in front of a bakery located near shops selling music and movies at about 7 pm (7.30 pm IST). A large number of people were present in the market, which is owned by the Punjab Regimental Centre. North West Frontier Province Information Minister Mian Iftikhar Hussain said 13 people were killed and 22 injured in the suicide attack. An army spokesman said four soldiers were among the dead. The injured, including six security personnel, were rushed to nearby hospitals. The seriously injured were later shifted to the NWFP capital of Peshawar. Deputy Inspector General of police Akhtar Ali Shah said the bomber blew himself up at the entrance of the bakery when he was stopped by security personnel. Other officials said parts of the body of the bomber, believed to be in his twenties, had been found. A large number of army personnel visit the market and the bakery on weekends and it is believed they were the bomber's main target. Local Taliban commanders claimed responsibility for the attack. They told TV channels that the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan had permitted them to carry out such attacks in retaliation for military operations being conducted in Darra Adam Khel town.

<http://www.hindu.com/2008/05/19/stories/2008051954091500.htm>, 19 May 2008

Nuclear facilities safe and secure, says China

Nuclear facilities safe and secure, says China Three-day mourning declared; Olympic torch relay put-off BEIJING: All the nuclear facilities in the earthquake-hit areas are safe and secure, said a senior military officer on Sunday. Ma Jian, Deputy Director of the Combat Department of the General Staff Headquarters of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA), said nuclear facilities had been put under strict protection by forces of the armed police and PLA immediately after the earthquake struck on May 12. I could say in a responsible manner that all these facilities are safe and secure, said Mr. Ma. There is no problem at all. To a question about whether military facilities in Sichuan were affected, Mr. Ma said some of the facilities were slightly affected. The military has conducted a thorough inspection of all the facilities and garrisons involved and found no major damage to the facilities, he added. Three-day mourning Flags will be kept at half-mast and public amusements closed for three days from Monday as China begins a three-day mourning period for victims. The death toll from the powerful earthquake that jolted Sichuan Province had risen to 32,477 as of Sunday, while the number of injured reached 2,20,109. In Sichuan alone, 31,978 people were killed, with 2,09,905 others injured. The State Council, the Cabinet, on Sunday ordered a nation-wide display of respect for the dead. The Olympic torch relay would also be suspended from Monday to Wednesday, said the Olympic organising committee. Hus appeal President Hu Jintao on Sunday told rescuers to use every available means to reach every affected village. We must try every method to send rescuers to quake-hit villages, instead of just working in towns and cities, since a large number of soldiers have entered the quake-hit regions, said Mr. Hu while visiting Yinghua township, Shifang city. We must send rescue teams, carrying food and

drinking water, to the worst-hit villages, even on foot, as soon as possible, he said, travelling on bumpy roads to visit one quake-hit villages to another, comforting victims and encouraging rescuers. I know you lost family and property. I share the pain with you, he said, adding: We will try every effort to save your people once there is the slightest hope and possibility. Walking over the rubble of a fertilizer factory building, Mr. Hu told rescuers that every trapped person was counting on them and they should seize every second to work as time was limited. I truly believe that the heroic Chinese people will not yield to any difficulty! he shouted in front of the rescuers. The China Seismological Bureau (CSB) on Sunday revised the magnitude of last weeks earthquake from 7.8 to 8.0 on the Richter Scale. Xinhua

<http://www.hindu.com/2008/05/20/stories/2008052056360900.htm>, 20 May 2008

Nuclear deal will have little effect on broad framework of bilateral ties

U.S. Ambassador to India David Mulford says time may be running short for the nuclear deal. However, business, education and political links will cement the relationship beyond any changes in the leadership of both countries. He was speaking to senior journalists at The Hindu in Chennai on Monday. Excerpts. Opening remarks of Ambassador Mulford: I m coming up to almost four and a half years in India now, which will shortly make me the second longest serving ambassador in the history of the United States in India. And India is a place that I think you'll probably agree requires some time to understand I won't say master, but to understand. And so I've developed a number of perspectives. Oddly enough, one of them is very much the same as when I arrived. Which is and I think its because I come from a private sector background I see the U.S.-India relationship essentially as a massive civil private sector relationship. The U.S. and India have a comprehensive relationship [that] extends into virtually every area of human activity. And this has been a continuing process and it has continued right along without any interruption. The only difference is that in the last year or two, the civil nuclear issue has, in a way, sucked the oxygen out of everything else. And the media has focussed mainly on that. All these other things, they get reported and they get discussed but not as a comprehensive unit. Diverse and durable That is understandable, but I always take a moment to emphasise that, because it is a very, very durable relationship, a people-to-people, company-to-company, university-to-university, city-to-city It is a very diverse and durable relationship. And what this means is that in the official bilateral relationship where the two governments do not always see eye to eye on a variety of issues and indeed, in the case of the civil nuclear agreement, we have not yet completed that agreement and people say, Well, isnt that going to damage the relationship? The answer to that, I think, is that it will have very little effect on the broad exterior part of the relationship. I think at the heart of the relationship, its unlikely to have a significant impact, but I dont think you can say it wont have any, simply because there is a level of trust that is built up between the two partners on things and both sides have degrees of discretion in what they can do. So whether or not the same breakthrough feeling on discretionary issues will persist, or will suffer a period of setback or pause, I just dont think anybody can really know. But none of this will, in my view, change the essential direction and health of the relationship. From what you said about the nuclear deal, can we assume that it is virtually dead? No, no the deal isnt dead. Its very hard to manage this process in public and therefore what we did was, we indicated to people that we needed

to have the decision by India to go forward fairly early in this year. And the reason for that was the Congressional timetable that the Congress had prescribed when it passed the Hyde Act for bringing the 123 package back to Congress for final processing. And as time has gone on, it's become clear that we can no longer meet that timetable and that Congress will not be able to meet that timetable in accordance with those procedures. But the United States Congress is an institution which has a small core of leaders who can decide to approach something differently. And in more recent times, when we've had various Congressional visitors, you've seen people like Mr. [Joseph] Biden (U.S. Senator) indicate that we understand the delay and were patient with local process in India and we respect that process and it looks as if, you know, we get something by June, we can still process it. So that's where things stand. I think we're down to the last days, practically speaking, but nobody can be absolutely sure because the Congress could make a determination that something that's so important, and do it on short notice, so nobody can be absolutely sure. But we're clearly at the point where there is, practically speaking, only a very narrow window to complete the process. Ambassador, while the deal is still in the process of being completed, what will the U.S. government's stance be on India sourcing uranium from non-NSG sources like Niger? Well, it's all been determined that everything will stay in place. Because if India was going to buy uranium from somebody else I mean, they could have done that anytime. The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) of countries will not cooperate with that and nor will the major countries such as France and Russia, who have reached understandings about cooperating with India, but whose conditions for activating those understandings is that the current deal has to go through the IAEA, the NSG process, and be ratified by the full international community of civilian nuclear countries. So that would be regarded with disapproval. In the field of education, what are the prospects for further cooperation? If you talk to American universities, I think what you'll find is that they have a huge interest in India. [It is] not just in the case of attracting more Indian students, but in exchanging students, exchanging professors, and in many cases, even thinking about investing capital in India, in the university system, either on a joint venture basis with other players here. There's a lot of thinking going on. I think down the road, U.S. universities are going to be looking at different models of cooperation, all the way from exchanges to joint degrees, investment in a physical plant in India if possible. But I think that's still to come, because it's in the discussion and reflection stage. There are still visa restrictions in India, we learn, for many American students. Well, we have 84,000 Indian students in America and here, we have 1,700 Americans. So there's a trade imbalance there of some considerable size and it seems to me remarkable that that should persist. In fact, I don't think it will, because India's arrival on the world stage or if you want to put it that way, India's arrival in the U.S. is something that's only three or four years old. Young people are fascinated by India and they're going to be putting pressure on their universities to have an exchange programme here just as they have in Europe or Japan or China or wherever. In fact, I know that's going on. So the universities are going to have to find a way to accommodate those demands because American students want to come here. Some American scholars that we know for a long period tell us that the authorities are very resistant to allowing them to work, especially on sensitive subjects or areas, here in India, and this has been not a recent problem but of fairly long standing. Have you heard about it? Yes, this is an issue that's been very much on my plate because we've had enormous problems in the

Fulbright programme. We have about 90 Fulbright scholars a year that come to India. The applications are processed and the announcements are made in April, and then the arrangement is that within three months, those scholars are to be processed and given visas and come to India for the school year. We actually got to the point two years ago, where, of our 90 scholars, only 10 or 12 were cleared. So I took this up with the government. There were two problems getting the visas, [and] also rejection of projects without explanation for about 10 or 12 per cent of the applicants. Whereas for the Fulbright students from India coming to America, we process a Fulbright in an afternoon, we don't care what subject he's studying. Expanding the Fulbright We then looked into the question of the Fulbright programme itself. When you look around the world at the Fulbright programme generally, most countries, over the years, have become contributors to the programme. So I approached the Indian government, and said I thought that the right thing to do here is two things alter the agreement so that India put up half the money and therefore would be a participant and we could expand the programme. And secondly, that we should authorise them to go to private corporations and raise money on top of that, so that a programme which has about 150 scholars today, could easily have 600 or 700. And they have, at this point, agreed in principle to these things. We are in the process of, we hope, working these things through to the point where we can complete this and sign a new agreement. The President Bush remark recently about the impact of rising Indian and Chinese demands on food prices has triggered a certain amount of reaction here in India. You know President Bush well, so what do you think he meant? Well, I issued a statement, which I think you saw, which was very short and to the point. President Bush is a great admirer and friend of India and he was making an observation among many that was taken out of context. I was surprised and I was not all impressed by the superficiality of the comments that came, especially from India. I think we have to focus on getting ahead with solving problems and move away from these really unpleasant vitriolic comments against Mr. Bush who has done a lot for India, he's a great friend of India. President Bush apart, do you think the large scale shift to biofuels from corn and agriculture has it really had an impact on world food prices? Well, that's an issue that I think will take some time to really understand because biofuels were a fashionable solution for many, many years. It is now clear, it is having unintended consequences which are quite hard to measure in terms of prices. Economists put the effect at something like three per cent on food prices. My own instinct is that it must be higher than that. I think now people are looking to step back and I think they'll look a little more intelligently into the range of the problem. And the United States is in the process of making what would be a very big change in its food programme, which is to buy food close to where the food is needed, instead of sending U.S. food. This is a time of change in both our countries, major change, a change in administration, perhaps earlier in the U.S. than here, and there are some uncertainties and imponderables. What are the certainties and ponderables in this relationship? I think of all the major relationships the U.S. has around the world, this is the one that will probably change least by a change in administrations in Washington. I say that because, Americans like India. They've discovered Indians in America in a much more pronounced way over the last few years. The Indian community in America is very popular, very admired, very respected. I think that India has in many ways captured the imagination of America and therefore I see the relationship continuing pretty well as it is today. That might change if there was a major

rupture over something in the policy area but I don't really see that happening, because between the United States and India, there is a body of fairly common interests. We have all the features of democracy that we share a free press, the rule of law, individual freedom, religious tolerance, a secular state, a military that is under the control of political civilian leadership there's a long list of these things, and what they generate is a wide variety of similar values and similar interests, and after all this is what governs the relations between nations. And therefore, I think that the change in administration will not be a significant event.

<http://www.hindu.com/2008/05/20/stories/2008052052851600.htm>, 20 May 2008

Tents are our top need: China

BEIJING: China has requested the international community to offer tents among other relief donations to survivors in quake-hit Sichuan. Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said on Monday: China would like the international community to give priority to tents when providing relief materials. Citing information from the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Mr. Qin said many tents were required to shelter victims whose houses collapsed in the quakes, especially as it's raining in the affected areas now. Silence observed Millions of people in China and overseas observed three minutes silence at 2:28 p.m. on Monday in memory of the victims of last week's earthquake. President Hu Jintao, top legislator Wu Bangguo, Premier Wen Jiabao and leaders including Jia Qinglin, Li Changchun, Xi Jinping, He Guoqiang and Zhou Yongkang stood in silence here. The quake has killed at least 34,073 people and officials said the final toll could exceed 50,000. Across the country, sirens and horns wailed and people fell silent. China Central TV darkened its screen. In the headquarters of the Beijing Organising Committee for the Olympics, employees gathered in front of their office building, facing towards Sichuan, in a silent tribute. In Tiananmen Square, thousands of people shouted Go, Go, China!, Brave and strong, China! and Brave and Strong, Wenchuan!, and Hang on, Sichuan! Financial markets suspended trading for three minutes. Some traders said people had asked about buying stocks of Sichuan-based companies to show support. Photo: Xinhua Children mourn quake victims, in Wuhu in Anhui Province on Monday The candles depict the date of the quake. Though rescuers are being challenged by the rugged terrain and aftershocks in Sichuan, more than 1,00,000 soldiers and rescuers were still searching for survivors. The earthquake took away people's lives, but it will not frighten the brave Chinese people into retreat. We will get over the hardships and a stronger China will have a better future, said He Bin, a police officer of Anhui Provincial Public Security Department. Workers buried More than 200 workers were buried in the past two days by frequent mudflows while repairing roads damaged by the earthquake, said Transport Ministry official Dai Dongchang on Monday. Two construction machines and six vehicles were also buried in the mud flows.. Landslips, mudflows and aftershocks were frequent after the quake. Blocked rivers swollen by heavy rain threatened to burst their banks. Mr. Dai said workers risked their lives repairing three major roads connecting Wenchuan and neighbouring counties. By Monday, traffic had resumed on these roads. Xinhua Printer friendly page

<http://www.hindu.com/2008/05/20/stories/2008052056600100.htm>, 20 May 2008

Indian pilgrims killed in Nepal

Indian pilgrims killed in Nepal Kathmandu: At least 20 people were killed when a bus carrying 100 passengers, including 35 Indian pilgrims, plunged into the Rapti river in Dang district in south-west Nepal on Monday. Twenty-eight people were injured and 40 reported missing. The bus was going from Krishna Nagar in Kapilvastu to Pyuthan district. PTI

<http://www.hindu.com/2008/05/21/stories/2008052159761300.htm>, 21 May 2008

Pilgrimage put off

NEW DELHI: The Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage this year has been postponed by nearly two weeks after China said it would be unable to receive the pilgrims due to domestic reasons. The yatra traditionally begins from June 1. The government is trying to accommodate the first two batches of pilgrims, who will be affected by the postponement, in the subsequent groups. Both Mt. Kailash and Mansarovar lake are in China. As many as 16 batches of about 60 pilgrims each were to take part in the yatra which was to last till September 24. One batch takes 26 days to undertake the pilgrimage. The annual Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage for 2008 was scheduled to begin on June 1. The government of China conveyed to the Ministry of External Affairs that on account of domestic reasons, it will not be in a position to receive pilgrims before June 21, said a Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson in response to a question. In view of this, the MEA had to cancel the batch numbers one and two. The Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage for 2008 will now commence from the batch number three which is scheduled to depart New Delhi on June 13. The Ministry is continuing its efforts with the China to accommodate the pilgrims of the batch numbers one and two in later batches, he said. BJP upset BJP spokesperson Ravi Shankar Prasad said the party was upset that the yatra had been postponed. He said it was a question of our faith and the Indian government must take up with China at a high level the issue. We are worried. The Chinese government has not indicated the reasons for the postponement, he said. The country needs to know the reason for the postponement. If there were compelling reasons for the delay, the people must be told, he said. Even though some reporters reminded Mr. Prasad that China had recently had an earthquake resulting in the loss of thousands of lives, Mr. Prasad suggested that this reason must be spelt out.

<http://www.hindu.com/2008/05/21/stories/2008052160880100.htm>, 21 May 2008

Microsoft plans to buy part of Yahoo

Microsoft plans to buy part of Yahoo BOSTON: Microsoft Corp proposes to buy Yahoo Inc's search business and take a minority stake in the Web pioneer, stopping short of a full-out merger. As part of the deal, Yahoo would sell its Asian assets, including significant minority stakes in Yahoo Japan and China's Alibaba Group, while Microsoft would buy a chunk of what remains of the company.

<http://www.hindu.com/2008/05/21/stories/2008052160900100.htm>, 21 May 2008

LeT commander killed in J&K

LeT commander killed in J&K Srinagar: A self-styled battalion commander of Lashkar-e-Taiba was killed in a gunfight with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Bandipora district on Tuesday. Abdul Rehman alias Zia, a resident of Pakistan, was killed by the troops in the Kuta Satri forest, an Army spokesman said. The security forces had laid

surveillance and ambush in the forest areas to track suspected militant movement. Around 5.30 a.m., suspicious movement was noticed by the troops and on being challenged, a militant opened fire in an attempt to escape. Zia was killed in retaliatory fire. PTI

<http://www.hindu.com/2008/05/22/stories/2008052260130100.htm>, 22 May 2008

Suspected HuJI militant arrested in Delhi

Suspected HuJI militant arrested in Delhi NEW DELHI: A suspected HuJI militant was arrested by the Special Cell of the Delhi police outside the New Delhi railway station on Wednesday. A joint team of the Special Cell and Central Intelligence is interrogating him to find out whether he was part of the module which carried out the Jaipur blasts. The Special Cell received a tip-off that a suspected militant would come here on board a train from Howrah in West Bengal.

<http://www.ndtv.com/convergence/ndtv/story.aspx?id=NEWEN20080050691>, 23 May 2008

Today in History - May 23

On May 23, 1971, North Vietnamese demolition experts infiltrated a major US air base at Cam Ranh Bay, blowing up six tanks of aviation fuel, which resulted in the loss of about 1.5 million gallons of fuel. US commander Creighton Abrams criticised the inadequate security. Other important events on this day: In 1949, the Federal Republic of Germany (popularly known as West Germany) was formally established as a separate and independent nation. This action was marked as an effective end to any discussion of reuniting East and West Germany. In 1960, a tsunami caused by an earthquake off the coast of Chile travels across the Pacific Ocean and kills 61 people in Hilo, Hawaii. A massive 8.5-magnitude quake had killed thousands in Chile the previous day. In 1915, Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary, entering in the First World War on the side of the Allies - Britain, France and Russia.

<http://www.ndtv.com/convergence/ndtv/story.aspx?id=NEWEN20080050390&ch=5/22/2008%2012:54:00%20PM>, 23 May 2008

Pak set to cut Musharraf's powers

Pakistan government is giving finishing touches to a sweeping constitutional amendment package that will clip President Pervez Musharraf's powers and pave the way for reinstating judges sacked by him last year, an issue that has imperiled the fragile ruling coalition. "The draft is almost complete and it is being finalised. There are a number of amendments in the package," Law Minister Farooq Naek, who has been working on the package with a team of legal experts for the past few days, said. The package, which will be tabled in Parliament as the 18th Constitution Amendment Bill before the forthcoming budget session, would balance the powers between the President and the Prime Minister and introduce strict punishment for subverting the Constitution. Experts said it would "drastically" alter the Constitution and will be bigger in scope than the eighth Constitution amendment introduced by late military ruler Gen Zia-ul-Haq nearly 23 years ago. Asif Ali Zardari, the Chairman of the ruling Pakistan People's Party, has given "specific instructions" that the "feelings and opinions of all sections of society, including the hopes of the public and questions of the legal fraternity, are tackled by the package,"

Naek said. He said Article 6 of the Constitution, introduced in 1973, described any move to subvert the Constitution as "high treason" but made no mention of which courts will try such cases or procedures under which they would be tried. "We have changed the definition of treason. We will also amend the High Treason Act (framed in 1973) and frame new rules," the minister told reporters on Monday night. Article 58(2b) of the Constitution, which empowers the President to dissolve the National Assembly or lower house of Parliament and dismiss the Prime Minister, would be repealed through the proposed bill, the Dawn newspaper quoted sources as saying. This article was repealed by the second government of PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif, but was re introduced by President Pervez Musharraf. The President is also expected to lose his powers to appoint the three service chiefs, provincial governors and the chief election commissioner (CEC). The package will also change the process for appointing the CEC and provide financial autonomy to the Election Commission. The amendment to Article 6 and relevant acts is being made to deter judges from swearing allegiance to military rulers and validating the abrogation or suspension of the constitution as was done after Musharraf imposed emergency last year, the sources said. Experts pointed out no action had ever been against military dictators who suspended the constitutions or judges who validated their actions. The proposed amendment will hold such judges "guilty of conniving with a dictator and render them liable to be tried under the treason act", the sources said. However, it was not immediately clear what conditions will be attached to the reinstatement of the deposed judges. A reduction in the chief justice's tenure is being seen as quite likely. The government is likely to table the bill in Parliament and reinstate the judges through a resolution in a joint sitting of the National Assembly and Senate by the end of this month.

<http://www.ndtv.com/convergence/ndtv/story.aspx?id=NEWEN20080050469&ch=5/22/2008%2012:54:00%20PM>, 23 May 2008

Bush may attack Iran before term ends: Report

United States President George W Bush is mulling an attack on Iran before the end of his term next year to "foil" its nuclear ambitions and counter Hezbollah's domination in Lebanon, a media report has said. However, the "hesitancy" of Defence Secretary Robert Gates and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was preventing the administration from deciding to launch an attack on the Islamic Republic, the Army Radio reported quoting officials in Jerusalem. A senior member of Bush's entourage, during a recent visit to Israel, said at a closed-door meeting that the US President and Vice-President Dick Cheney were of the opinion that military action was called for. As per Israeli assessments, recent turmoil in Lebanon where Hezbollah has established de facto control with Iran's help was advancing an American attack, the report said. Bush is said to be of the opinion that Hezbollah's show of strength was evidence of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's growing influence. The officials quoted Bush as saying that "the disease must be treated - not its symptoms." The US President had launched a scathing attack against Ahmedinejad during a Knesset speech here last week by saying that "the President of Iran dreams of returning the Middle East to the Middle Ages." "Permitting the world's leading sponsor of terror to possess the world's deadliest weapon would be an unforgivable betrayal of future generations. For the sake of peace, the world must not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon," Bush had said.

Indian Express, 25 May 2008

In face of Beijing counterclaim, Delhi orders fresh 'hi-tech' survey of Sikkim

New Delhi, May 24: Stumped by fresh Chinese claims in North Sikkim that Beijing seeks to substantiate by producing maps which it says are 'more accurate' because they have been plotted using the best available technology, the government has asked the Survey of India to carry out a fresh survey of the Northern plateau in Sikkim using latest methods to validate and verify Indian positions. Until now, India has relied on a 1924 Survey of India map of the area which records 23 stone cairns in the area that the Chinese now threaten to destroy. In all, the Chinese claim 2.1 sq km in what is referred to as the 'Finger Area' in Sikkim's northern plateau. Given that this falls in the plateau area where the watershed "the geographical divide used in mountains to demarcate boundaries" is not clearly identified at times, sources said, the survey is aimed at marking out the watershed

Times of India, 28 May 2008

'Survey on in Sikkim region eyed by China'

NEW DELHI: Army chief General Deepak Kapoor said on Tuesday that India was conducting a survey in a region of Sikkim over which China has recently laid claim. Kapoor said there was nothing unusual in the survey as such exercises were on in other places too, but the move appears to be aimed at revalidating New Delhi's position in the face of Beijing's claim. The army chief said there was no problem "between us and them" over the north Sikkim area called 'Finger Point'. "Within our territory, we can survey and patrol as we have been doing for years," Kapoor said on the sidelines of a defence seminar

Hindu, 31 May 2008

IAF copters take part in Berlin air show

BERLIN: HAL Dhruv helicopters belonging to the IAF took part in the International Aerospace Exhibition at the Schoenefeld airport, near Berlin, on Friday. The biannual show, with India as guest of honour, the third biggest in Europe after those in Britain and France, is expected to draw more than 1,100 exhibitors from 37 countries