

Hindustan Times, 1 November 2004

Indian media barred from Pakistan PM's meet in Nepal

Kathmandu, Pakistani authorities in Nepal have barred the Indian media from a programme organised for Prime Minister Shaikat Aziz who arrives in Kathmandu on Monday. Aziz, heading a 63-member delegation that includes his wife, four ministers and Pakistani foreign secretary Riaz Khokhar, is on a two-day visit as the chairman of SAARC. Representatives of the Indian media were told they would not be admitted to a function at Hotel Soaltee Oberoi where Aziz is meeting with nearly 600 people, including the Nepalese media. The Pakistani embassy in Kathmandu, headed by Ambassador Zamim Akram, has a long tradition of boycotting the Indian media. During the SAARC Summit, they refused visa to Nepal One to cover the event. A Pakistani embassy official said the Indian media has been boycotted because they "misrepresent what we say".

The Hindu, 2 November 2004

'Shanghai Cooperation Organisation yet to define position on India'

New Delhi, Nov. 1. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), a grouping of China, Russia and Central Asian States, has not yet taken a position on India associating with the SCO, the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Sadik S. Safayev, said during a recent visit to India. Speaking to this correspondent, Mr. Safayev, who met the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, told The Hindu that the SCO had no position since the issue of Indian membership or association had not been raised. "However, our position is that the SCO is not a closed group or a kind of a block with only a specific number of countries [in it]," he said. "It's open to cooperation with other countries." According to Mr. Safayev, the SCO goal of enhancing stability in Central Asia would be served if India, as an important regional power, cooperated with the grouping. "We welcome the interest of India in cooperating with the SCO," he said, adding that the "form and level" of cooperation could be defined in the future. "But," he stressed, "we are open to such cooperation."

The Hindu, 2 November 2004

'Fund of goodwill' for India in Japan: Somnath (P.S.Suryanarayana)

Singapore, Nov. 1. An Indian parliamentary delegation and the presiding officers of the two Houses of the Japanese Diet (Parliament) today explored the frontiers of bilateral cooperation during their meetings in Tokyo. The Lok Sabha Speaker and the leader of the Indian delegation, Somnath Chatterjee, told The Hindu from Tokyo that the "very friendly" discussions reflected the "fund of goodwill" for India in Japan's parliamentary and political circles. An agreement at the India-Japan parliamentary level, on support for each other's candidature for the permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council and an accent on bilateral economic cooperation were among the substantive aspects of the discussions. The delegation held talks with the Speaker of Japan's House of Representatives, Yohei Kono, the president of the House of Councillors, Chikage Oogi, the former Japanese Prime Minister, Tsutomu Hata, and the shadow Foreign Minister in the Opposition Democratic Party of Japan, Yukio Hatoyama.

The Tribune, 2 November 2004

200 terror camps in Bangladesh: Natwar (Rajeev Sharma)

New Delhi, Nov. 1. The logjam in India-Bangladesh relations on the issue of Dhaka's support to anti-India terrorist outfits was reflected during talks this evening between the visiting Bangladesh Foreign Minister Morshed Khan and his Indian counterpart K Natwar Singh as the two sides stuck to their stated positions. A senior South Block official told The Tribune that Mr Natwar Singh forcefully raised the issue of continued presence of over 200 terrorist camps on Bangladesh soil but Mr Morshed Khan mouthed Dhaka's oft-repeated assurance: that the Begum Zia government was committed not to allow the use of its territory for activities prejudicial to India's interests. Bangladesh has consistently denied Indian allegations of fomenting terrorism against New Delhi and has maintained that there were no terrorist camps on its soil.

The Hindu, 3 November 2004

Focus on 'intensifying' India-Japan ties (P.S.Suryanarayana)

Singapore, Nov. 2. The Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, and other political leaders today expressed satisfaction over the present state of Tokyo's relations with India and spoke of hopes for "further consolidation and expansion of the areas of friendship" between the two countries. This was indicated by the Lok Sabha Speaker and leader of the Indian parliamentary delegation, Somnath Chatterjee, after talks with Japanese leaders. He told The Hindu that the political ambience, in which the discussions took place, was one of working together in the context of the India-Japan "global partnership" and their willingness to support each other's candidature for the permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. The former Japanese Prime Minister, Yoshiro Mori, whose visit to India in August 2000 helped fashion the ongoing "global partnership" at the bilateral level, was among the leaders that the Indian delegation met in Tokyo today.

The Tribune, 3 November 2004

PM invited to address Asean meet

Singapore, Nov. 2. Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh has been invited to address the second Asean Business and Investment Summit (Asean BIS) to be held in Vientiane, Laos on November 27-28. Nine Heads of State will address the summit, which will bring together leaders from Asean nations, China, Japan, Korea and India, an official statement issued by the Asean BIS secretariat said. The summit provides business leaders from Asean and India the platform to network and work collaboratively towards a vibrant market and builds meaningful partnerships," Asean Business Advisory Council Chairman Oudet Souvannavong said. The event will leverage on the agriculture and tourism sectors to promote Asean economic integration.

The Tribune, 3 November 2004

Kanishka trial enters final stage

Vancouver, Nov.2. The two main accused in the Air-India trial are "guilty beyond a reasonable doubt," Canadian prosecutors said as they opened final arguments in the case. The guilt of Vancouver millionaire Ripudaman Singh Bagri and Kamloops mill worker Ajaib Singh Bagri, both charged with eight counts of murder and conspiracy in the bombing of the Kanishka flight which killed 329 off the Irish Coast on June 23, 1985, "has been proven beyond a reasonable doubt". "This is, in our submission, a politically motivated and terrorist event ...consistent only with a political and religious zealotry," Prosecution lawyer Robert Wright, who opened final arguments yesterday expected to last two weeks, told the British Columbia Court looking into the case. The prosecution's case is largely based on the testimony of three witnesses who said the defendants had confessed the crimes to them. "These admissions are the ultimate piece of evidence against the accused," Mr Wright told the Court.

The Hindu, 4 November 2004

UAE has lost its father figure, says Kalam (Atul Aneja)

Manama, Nov.3. The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, arrived in the Abu Dhabi this evening to condole the death of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), who died last night. Sheikh Zayed was buried this evening in a low-key funeral ceremony. Mr. Kalam said that in Sheikh Zayed's death "the UAE has lost its father figure, the Arab world a great visionary and an elder statesman and India a highly cherished friend." Sheikh Zayed became the ruler of Abu Dhabi in 1966 and the President of the UAE, which emerged with the merger of seven emirates, ending British rule in 1971. He was the architect of modern UAE, which from a cluster of desert emirates has now become a leading trade, banking and financial centre. The President will leave UAE for India tomorrow while Mr. Ahamed will visit Oman and Saudi Arabia on an official visit.

The Tribune, 4 November 2004

Nigerian President offers oil (Rajeev Sharma)

New Delhi, Nov.3. Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo was here for barely 15 hours since last evening but the substantive discussions he held today with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yielded assurances from both sides, bringing New Delhi closer to this major oil producing country. The Nigerian assurance, which India looks upon with keenness and immediate interest, is offer of providing more crude oil directly to New Delhi. President Obasanjo invited Indian companies to participate in bids for oil exploration and production. Besides, he has also invited Indian companies to participate in power generation and LPG. On the politico-diplomatic level, Mr Obasanjo offered support to India for permanent membership of the expanded United Nations Security Council (UNSC) saying that India was a natural candidate for the membership, a Foreign Office spokesman said this in a statement. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa (15 crore) is India's largest trading partner in Africa with a bilateral annual trade figure of \$ 3.5 billion which is more than India's trade with Russia.

The Hindu, 5 November 2004

India to take forward strategic partnership with E.U. (Amit Baruah)

New Delhi, Nov.4. India views the European Union as one of the "poles" in a multi-polar world and is poised to take its strategic partnership forward with it at the November 8 annual summit between the two entities at The Hague in the Netherlands. It will be New Delhi's first summit with an enlarged European Union. An "action plan" to enhance India-E.U. cooperation in the economic, political and cultural fields will be spelt out in the months after the fifth summit to be attended by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. It will then be endorsed at the sixth summit next year. As part of the "strategic partnership", India has suggested a dialogue on "Islam in a plural, democratic and open society." Agreeing with an E.U. paper on the contours of the strategic partnership, India, too, is keen on upgrading the dialogue on anti-terrorism to security cooperation.

The Hindu, 6 November 2004

India-Singapore economic pact on the cards (P.S.Suryanarayana)

Singapore, Nov.5. The negotiations between India and Singapore for the conclusion of a comprehensive economic cooperation agreement (CECA) "are moving in the right direction." The progress was broadly reviewed as top officials of the two countries held the sixth round of foreign office consultations here on Thursday, according to sources on both sides. The officials hoped that the economic pact could be finalised by the end of this year, if not before the Association of South East Asian Nations-India summit in Laos towards the end of this month. The consultations, which centred on various aspects of the "problem-free" bilateral relationship, covered discussions on regional and international issues as well. The talks, described as "constructive and substantive" in scope, acquired additional importance in the current context of a fast-track move by India to enter into a "partnership for peace" with the ASEAN during the prospective summit in Laos.

The Hindu, 6 November 2004

India-E.U. partnership will set the stage for closer ties

New Delhi, Nov.5. The signing of a document on a strategic partnership between India and the European Union next week will "mark the culmination of a journey of cooperation [between us] which began a few years ago," the Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, said here today. The strategic partnership - the sixth for Europe after the U.S., Canada, Russia, China and Japan - will be formally announced at the end of the India-E.U. summit in The Hague on November 8. The Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who will lead the high-powered Indian delegation, will hold discussions with the Dutch Prime Minister, Jan Peter Balkenende, who holds the rotating presidency of the E.U., the European Council head, Romano Prodi, and the E.U. high representative, Javier Solana.

The Hindu, 8 November 2004

'Strategic partnership' likely to be formalised with E.U.

NEW DELHI, NOV. 7. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today said the country was likely to formalise a 'strategic partnership' with the European Union during the two-day summit at The Hague. Before his departure to attend the 5th India-European Union summit, he addressed the media at his 7 Race Course Road residence, where he was seen off by the United Progressive Alliance Chairperson, Sonia Gandhi, Cabinet Ministers, including Pranab Mukherjee and Arjun Singh, chiefs of the three Services and senior officials. Dr. Singh said: "The European Union is emerging as a politically influential, economically powerful and demographically diverse regional entity in the world. It is not only India's largest trading partner, but also our largest source of foreign direct investment. Our relations are based on shared values - democracy, pluralism, rule of law, free press and independent judiciary. Our partnership has evolved over the years from economic and development cooperation to a broad-based engagement on a wide range of issues - globalisation, terrorism, proliferation, energy and environment."

The Hindu, 8 November 2004

Pakistan stalling talks with separatists?

JAMMU, NOV. 7. The Ministry of Home Affairs has said that Pakistan is exerting pressure on the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (Ansari group) not to resume dialogue with the Indian Government till it (Pakistan) is involved in the talks as a third party. Assessing the stalled dialogue process with the separatists, a Home Ministry statement issued to the media here said: "The previous Government had held two rounds of talks at the level of the Deputy Prime Minister with the Hurriyat led by Maulana Abbas Ansari on January 22 and March 27, 2004. So far [the] Hurriyat leaders have not come forward for talks as they have some genuine difficulties. There have been attacks on some of the leaders, their relatives and institutions/properties belonging to them. There are indications that Pakistan is exerting pressure on the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (Ansari group) leaders, particularly its acting president, Maulvi Umar Farooq (Mirwaiz) not to resume the dialogue with India till Pakistan is also included... in the talks as a third party." Recently, the Mirwaiz had a meeting with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, in Amsterdam, where Gen. Musharraf made a halt on his way home from New York after the United Nations General Assembly session.

Hindustan Times, 8 November 2004

Combating terrorism will be 'priority area' for India-EU

The Hague, November 7: Strengthening cooperation in combating terrorism will be a "priority area" under the India-European Union Strategic Partnership that will be signed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and EU leaders, following their summit talks in The Hague on Monday. A joint statement to be issued at the end of the talks will unequivocally condemn "all acts, methods and practices of terrorism" and stress that solidarity and international cooperation are integral to fighting the menace. The draft statement will seek to deepen international consensus and efforts to combat terrorism by reducing the access of terrorists to financial and other economic resources. The two sides will also seek to protect the security of international transport and ensure effective systems of border control. They will also address issues that create an environment conducive to terrorism, including support for and recruitment into terrorism and explore ways to strengthen the bilateral counter-terrorism dialogue." The fight against terrorism must be carried out in full respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law," the draft statement says.

Hindustan Times, 9 November 2004

Pak denies pressuring APHC leaders not to talk to India

Islamabad, November 8: Pakistan on Monday dismissed as 'wrong' that it was pressuring Kashmiri leaders not to talk to the Indian government and claimed that the crossing of terrorists across the LoC has gone down because of its efforts. "They got it wrong because there is no pressure from Pakistan on any leader of the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), Pakistan Foreign Office Spokesman, Masood Khan told reporters in Islamabad. He was reacting to an Indian Home Ministry statement released in Jammu at the press conference of Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil on Sunday, which said there were "indications that Pakistan is exerting pressure on Hurriyat Conference (A) leaders, particularly its acting President Maulvi Farooq, not to resume the dialogue with India till Pakistan is also included as a third party." Khan said, "Prominent (Hurriyat) leaders have been saying that talks with Indian leaders without having parallel or simultaneous talks with Pakistan will have no effect or impact. Such a one-sided approach cannot produce results."

The Hindu, 10 November 2004

India repatriates 25 Pakistan nationals

CHANDIGARH, NOV. 9. In yet another goodwill gesture, the Indian Government today repatriated 25 Pakistan nationals who had been languishing in various jails for over a decade. The Pakistan nationals, including six persons nabbed in Jammu and Kashmir in 1990 for terrorist activities, had been arrested for separate offences. They returned through the only land route at the Attari-Wagah check post in Amritsar district this afternoon. An official from the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi, Mukhtiar Hussain, reached Amritsar with the emergency travel documents on the basis of which the prisoners were handed over by the Border Security Force to the Pakistan Rangers. Mr. Hussain described the gesture as "an advance gift of Id" from India to Pakistan. BSF officials at Wagah, told The Hindu over the phone that most of the 25 Pakistan nationals had spent terms in jails in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan and Delhi. Except for the 65-year-old Manzoor Ahmed, who was arrested in 1985, the rest had been held since 1990.

The Hindu, 11 November 2004

'Pakistan has softened stance on Kashmir'

JAMMU, NOV. 10. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, today said that Pakistan had made a

definite change in its "rigid stand" on the Kashmir tangle and was now making an effort to "realistically" tackle the problem. Addressing presspersons here today, Mr. Sayeed said: "There is a realisation in Pakistan that the problem needs to be dealt with in a realistic fashion. This is a good omen for the people of the State." On the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's formula of creating seven regions and then dealing with them separately, the Chief Minister said: "I may not agree with the details of the formula and the way it has been formulated, but I do appreciate the fact that the Pakistan President has moved away from the rigid stand of a plebiscite." Asked about fears that Gen. Musharraf's formula would lead to a communal division of Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Sayeed said: "I clarify that I may not agree with the details of the formula but the very fact that the Pakistan President has shown a willingness to discuss any proposal is a positive move for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. We may not agree with someone but we have to talk. Only by dialogue does the other side come to know our viewpoint..."

The Hindu, 11 November 2004

'Fast breeder reactor programme on right track' (T.S. Subramanian)

CHENNAI, NOV. 11. A team of European scientific representatives is coming to India this weekend to discuss India's participation in the prestigious International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project, which will generate energy through nuclear fusion. A futuristic project, the ITER, will try to replicate the way the sun generates energy. Alain Bugat, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission of France, in a recent interview to The Hindu here, said: "India has been asked, I believe, to be a partner or associate partner, whatever may be the formula" in the ITER project. "Europe is very positive about the candidature [partnership] of India" in the project. Anil Kakodkar, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission of India, had written to him last year on this issue, he added. France is represented through the European Union in the ITER. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, in his joint press conference with the European Union leaders at The Hague on November 8, referred to the Galileo, the global positioning system, and the ITER project and said that India would be willing to invest money "appropriate to our participation" in them.

The Hindu, 11 November 2004

'Shaukat Aziz visit will take forward peace process' (Siddharth Varadarajan)

NEW DELHI, NOV. 10. The visit of the Pakistan Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, to India later this month will set the stage for further forward movement of the ongoing peace process between the two countries, highly-placed sources said here today. Mr. Aziz, who will be in Delhi on November 22 and 23 in his capacity as chairman of SAARC, will meet the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and other senior leaders. "We will have talks with him," the sources said. "There is some forward movement on the transport issue - on bus services, as well as on the reopening of our respective consulates in Karachi and Mumbai. And in the next four to six weeks, the talks which have been already scheduled as part of the next round of the composite dialogue will also take place." The sources said that officials from the Pakistan High Commission have gone to Mumbai to look at some property where the new Pakistan consulate might be located. The Indian side is laying a lot of emphasis on people-to-people contact, the sources said. Instructions have been issued to the Indian High Commission in Islamabad that visas should be granted without delay "so long as there is nothing against a particular individual."

The Hindu, 14 November 2004

India, Russia plan big oil-gas deals (Amit Baruah)

New Delhi, Nov.13. India and Russia are poised to sign an agreement during the December 3-4 visit of the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, which will transform relations. A massive \$3-billion Indian investment in two oil and gas fields - \$1.5 billion in Sakhalin-III and another \$1.5 billion investment in the joint Russian-Kazakh Kurmangazy oil field in the Caspian - is envisaged in the memorandum of understanding (MoU) to be signed during the visit. The ONGC Videsh Ltd. (OVL) already has an investment of \$1.7 billion in the Sakhalin-I oil field. With the new investment, India and Russia could truly speak in terms of a real partnership in the energy sector, South Block officials told this correspondent.

The Telegraph, 15 November 2004

Britain in dock for shipping out risk (Amit Roy)

London, Nov.14. Britain's ageing ships, which are being broken up in India, pose a serious risk to the health of the usually poor workers involved in dismantling tankers and others vessels, an all-party House of Commons committee warned last week. The report exposes the scandal of richer countries getting poorer ones to undertake dirty and risky work they would not do themselves. The British MPs disclosed that some of the ships contain such dangerous material as asbestos, polychlorinated biphenals (PCBs) and waste oils, with workers exposed to conditions "unacceptable" by the standards of developed countries. The Commons Environment and Rural Affairs Committee said the need to outlaw irresponsible ship dismantling was "urgent" and blamed the British government for turning a blind eye to standards of health, safety and environmental protection at ship-breaking yards in developing countries.

The Telegraph, 16 November 2004

500 farmers set for Africa

Hyderabad, Nov.15. Andhra Pradesh has finalised plans to send 500 of its farmers to Uganda and Kenya by June next year. The state's adviser on foreign investments and human resources, C. Chandrasekhar Reddy, said the government will sign a memorandum of understanding with three organisations in Uganda and Kenya before March 2005. He said Andhra's proposals to provide investment, knowledge and entrepreneurship were welcomed in both countries during his visit to Africa this month. Each farmer will be given a lease on minimum 100 acres through farmers' cooperatives to be floated by the Andhra government. Letters of intent, Reddy said, had been procured from the Ugandan Investment Authority and Kenya's Tana and Athi Rivers Development Authority (Tarda) and Kerio Valley Development Authority (KVDA). "It is one more farmer-friendly

initiative," said chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy, who along with chief secretary Mohan Kanda is said to have principally concurred with the proposal.

The Pioneer, 16 November 2004

ASEAN rally will pave way for people-to-people contacts: Natwar Singh

New Delhi. The India-ASEAN car rally is the first public manifestation of the nation's improving relations with ASEAN countries and it would pave the way for a better people-to-people contact, External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh said here on Monday. "There is a lot happening in terms of improving relationship with ASEAN countries on the Government level but not much had been seen in public domain. The rally is the first public manifestation of this," he said flagging off the chalo ASEAN rally from India Gate. The chalo ASEAN rally, a prelude to the India-ASEAN car rally from Guwahati, has been flagged off from Shimla, Kanyakumari, Panaji and Gandhinagar. All these rallies will culminate at Guwahati on November 20, ahead of the ceremonial flag off by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on November 22. Pointing out that the Manmohan Singh Government's emphasis is on improving the country's relations with ASEAN and SAARC nations, he said such efforts would help in "integrating ourselves with the global economy".

The Pioneer, 16 November 2004

Indian delegation in France to seek increased cooperation with Interpol

New Delhi. A three-member delegation, led by Union Home Secretary Dharendra Singh, is in Lyons, France, to strengthen cooperation between Interpol and India. The delegation will also seek the deportation of three wanted French nationals - two in the Kerala spying case and one in the Goa child molestation case. CBI director US Misra and DIG P Kamraj are the other two members of the delegation. The two French nationals accused in the Kerala spying case were released at the insistence of the French mission in India, which had given a promise over their presence as and when required by the court. The Kerala Police, on January 11, 1996, caught seven persons carrying out a survey off Kochi without authorisation from official agencies. Investigation by the CBI revealed that the survey was intended to gather information about India's Naval operations in the Southern Command.

The Hindu, 17 November 2004

Oil diplomacy for energy security

New Delhi, Nov.16. Oil diplomacy to ensure energy security is the strategy now being proposed by the Petroleum Minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar. The first meeting of the newly created Standing Committee on Oil Diplomacy for Energy Security was held here today with the Foreign Minister, Natwar Singh, as well as a host of distinguished former diplomats attending it. An Additional Secretary from the Foreign Service, Talmiz Ahmed, was appointed in the Petroleum Ministry to deal with acquisitions of oil and gas properties abroad. After the meeting, Mr. Aiyar said the standing committee would advise the Government on ways to approach different countries in pursuit of energy security. The 11-member committee headed by the economist, Arjun Sengupta, has the former diplomat, M. Hamid Ansari, as convenor and the other members include Arundhati Ghosh, V.K. Nambiar and S.K. Lambah.

The Hindu, 17 November 2004

India, China border talks this week (P.S.Suryanarayana)

Singapore, Nov.16. The fourth round of parleys between India and China, at the level of Special Representatives, on the sensitive border dispute will be held in Beijing later this week. The National Security Adviser, J.N. Dixit, will begin these talks with the Chinese Executive Vice-Foreign Minister and designated Special Representative, Dai Bingguo, on November 18. Indicating this, sources in Beijing, associated with this process, did not wish to spell out how long the fourth round might last. The latest talks may go on for at least two days. Mr. Dixit is expected to call on the Chinese Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, besides holding discussions with Mr. Dai.

The Hindu, 18 November 2004

Dixit in Beijing for border talks (P.S.Suryanarayana)

Singapore, Nov.17. The National Security Adviser and India's special representative for talks on the boundary dispute with China, J.N. Dixit, arrived in Beijing today to participate in the fourth round of parleys. Official sources in Beijing said formal talks between Mr. Dixit and China's special representative, Dai Bingguo, who is also the executive Vice-Foreign Minister, would begin tomorrow. The ongoing process is designed to "explore, from the political perspective of the overall bilateral relationship, the framework of a boundary settlement," as spelt out in the joint statement issued in Beijing in June last year, following the talks that the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, held with Chinese leaders.

The Tribune, 18 November 2004

Russian Deputy PM arrives today

New Delhi, Nov.17. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander D Zhukov is arriving here tomorrow for a three-day visit, just about a fortnight before President Vladimir Putin comes here on December 3 for a crucial bilateral visit. Mr Zhukov is primarily aimed at strengthening the economic content of India-Russia relations as the bilateral trade between the two friendly countries is nowhere near to its potential, diplomatic sources said. Mr Zhukov will meet Finance Minister P Chidambaram and Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath tomorrow and will also have a meeting with the Indian business community, according to the Ministry of External Affairs. On November 19, the two sides will sign the protocol of the 10th Session of the Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation.

The Hindu, 19 November 2004

Dixit holds talks on border issue (P.S.Suryanarayana)

Singapore, Nov.18. The fourth round of specialist talks between India and China on their boundary dispute began in Beijing today. The National Security Adviser and India's Special Representative, J.N. Dixit, and the Chinese Executive Vice-Foreign Minister, Dai Bingguo, met to carry forward the sensitive parleys from the stage reached during the third round in New Delhi in July. Official sources, associated with the ongoing process, did not indicate how long the latest round might last. In line with the practice of safeguarding the confidentiality of the in-camera parleys, no hint was dropped about whether or not any breakthrough was likely. While it was considered possible that Mr. Dixit might call on the Chinese Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, officials did not wish to be drawn into discussing such details.

The Hindu, 19 November 2004

Natwar Singh, Zhukov hold talks

New Delhi, Nov.18. The External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, today held talks with the visiting Russian Deputy Prime Minister, Alexander Zhukov, as the India-Russia inter-governmental commission on trade and related matters met today. According to the External Affairs Ministry spokesman, Mr. Zhukov also met the Finance and Commerce Ministers, P. Chidambaram and Kamal Nath. He is scheduled to call on the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, on Friday. The spokesman said a diverse range of issues came up for discussion between the two leaders, including strengthening the trade and economic relationship between India and Russia. In 2003, two-way trade stood at \$1.67 billion, which both sides consider a modest figure.

The Hindu, 20 November 2004

Indo-Russian study group mooted

New Delhi, Nov.19. The Commerce and Industry Minister, Kamal Nath, today proposed setting up of a joint study group on a possible Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement between India and Russia. The proposal was welcomed by the visiting Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, Alexander D Zhukov, during a meeting with Mr. Kamal Nath yesterday. He said such an expert group would impart a fresh impetus to trade between India and Russia. Recalling the strong trade ties that India traditionally had with Russia, Mr. Kamal Nath called for substantive steps to reverse the declining trend in the volume of trade between the two countries. In this context, the Commerce Minister urged Russia to step up imports of tea, tobacco and manufactured goods from India.

The Hindu, 20 November 2004

"Shocking" stagnation in India-Japan ties (R.Gopalakrishnan)

Chennai, Nov.19. Japan should make India a "strategic partner in the diplomatic, political and economic sense" to ensure that its overseas development assistance (ODA) to India promotes economic relations at the private sector level involving investment and transfer of technology, says Hideki Esho, Professor of Economics in Hosei University, Tokyo. Prof. Esho, who heads a task force to prepare a five-year action plan for Japanese ODA to India, says there is a disjunction between the high priority that Japan gives to India in development assistance and the limited - and even declining - share of Japan and India in each other's imports and cross-border investments. Till 1995, Japan was the largest source of ODA for India, and later China took that position. This year India has again become the biggest recipient of Japanese assistance, with a "drastic reduction" in aid to China. However, during the few years when Japanese aid flowed to China, Japanese (direct) investment in China as also trade with China had grown.

The Pioneer, 20 November 2004

India, China end 4th round border talks

Beijing. India and China concluded a crucial round of border talks here on Friday on a positive note with the two sides having "frank" and "detailed" exchanges of views on the principles that could form the framework of a possible boundary agreement. The fourth round of talks, at the level of special representatives, was held here between National Security Advisor JN Dixit and Chinese Executive Vice-Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo from November 18-19. "The meeting was held in a friendly, constructive and cooperative atmosphere. The exchange of views was frank and detailed," the Indian Embassy said in a Statement. The in-camera discussions under the fourth round of talks were spread over three rounds, informed sources said, adding that two rounds were held on Thursday, the first day of the talks. The third round was held this morning. The India-China boundary issue is a "very complex problem and we are making gradual progress," the sources said.

The Hindu, 20 November 2004

India's position on Iraq shifts? (Amit Baruah)

New Delhi, Nov.19. Has there been a shift in New Delhi's position on Iraq following the re-election of George W. Bush as President of the United States for a second term? A close reading of the joint press statement issued by India and the European Union at their fifth summit on November 8 suggests that the new "position" is a departure from the past. "We welcome the restoration of full sovereignty to Iraq and the unanimous adoption of UNSCR [United Nations' Security Council Resolution] 1546, which underlines the support of the international community to the Interim Government of Iraq as it guides the country towards elections," the text issued at The Hague said. On June 9, a day after Resolution 1546 was passed, the External Affairs Ministry spokesman had this to say: "We see the endorsement of the Interim Government of Iraq as the first step towards the transparent transfer of full sovereignty to the people of Iraq. The priority now should be to ensure an early return to conditions of security and normalcy for all the people of Iraq," the spokesman added.

The Telegraph, 21 November 2004

Sharon deputy set for Delhi (Pranay Sharma)

New Delhi, Nov. 20: Israeli Vice-Premier Ehud Olmert, who caused a furore last year by saying Yasser Arafat must be killed if there was to be any headway in the peace process, is slated to visit India next month. His visit is a sign that the United Progressive Alliance government has managed to de-link its ties with Israel from its support for the Palestinians. The dates for Olmert's visit have not been finalised, but he is likely to visit in December. His visit will be preceded by a joint working group meeting on counter-terrorism, scheduled for later this month. Earlier this week, two sides held their first foreign office consultation since the Congress came to power. The meeting went off well, the more so for Israel as foreign minister K. Natwar Singh assured the visitors that bilateral ties would not be affected by Delhi's support for Palestinian statehood.

The Hindu, 22 November 2004

India planning to restart Dabhol plant by 2006-end

New Delhi, Nov. 21. India is likely to reclaim the liquefied natural gas (LNG) supply contract the U.S. energy major, Enron, had with Oman, to restart the 2,184 MW Dabhol power plant in Maharashtra. Enron had contracted 1.6 million tonnes LNG from Oman and 0.5 million tonnes from Abu Dhabi, but the supplies never started as the U.S. major shut the plant following a payment dispute with the Maharashtra State Electricity Board. "We are looking at restarting the power plant by 2006-end for which we need LNG. The best course to get the fuel in the present tight supply scenario is to reclaim the LNG the Dabhol Power Company had contracted," a top government official said.

The Tribune, 23 November 2004

India, UK to discuss peacekeeping issues today

New Delhi, Nov. 22. A delegation from the UK Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is in India to conduct a bilateral peacekeeping engagement with the Ministry for External Affairs and the Defence Ministry from November 23 to 25. The Joint Working Group would explore the challenges and issues of multidimensional peacekeeping and exchange thoughts on peacekeeping operations at the conceptual and operational levels, according to the British High Commission here. The UK delegation is led by Maj Gen Tim Cross CBE, recently appointed as GOC Theatre Troops, HQ Land. Major General Cross said, "The UK has great respect for India as a major troop contributing nation to peacekeeping operations and I am sure we will have much to learn from Indian experiences and current doctrine. I hope also that we will be able to share some of our latest thinking and we look forward to further developing this series of important dialogues."

The Hindu, 24 November 2004

Sever military ties with Israel: Left

New Delhi, Nov. 23. Reiterating their commitment to the Palestinian cause, the Left parties today asked the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance Government at the Centre to sever India's military ties with Israel forged by the previous National Democratic Alliance Government. Successive Indian Governments and the people have extended support to the freedom movement of the Palestinians against Israeli occupation, but the Bharatiya Janata Party-led NDA Government ignored the sentiments of the people and betrayed the Palestinians by cementing ties with Israel, particularly in the field of defence, communist leaders said here at a condolence meeting to pay tributes to the Palestine Liberation Organisation leader, Yasser Arafat.

The Telegraph, 25 November 2004

Train to Myanmar gets nod (Khelen Thokchom)

Imphal, Nov. 24. Delhi has given its nod to a project to connect Manipur with Mandalay, in neighbouring Myanmar, by rail. The project will be undertaken after the extension of the track from Jiribam, which is at present Manipur's lone railhead, to Imphal via Tupul in Tamenglong district. Manipur chief minister Okram Ibobi Singh made the announcement at a reception for participants in the Indo-Asean car rally at the main stadium of Imphal's Khuman Lampak Sports Complex. He described the proposal as a natural progression of Delhi's "look east" policy. Ibobi Singh said a feasibility survey for the proposed Imphal-Moreh rail link would get under way next month.

Indian Express, 26 November 2004

Chinese PM to visit India by April 2005

New Delhi, Nov. 25. Chinese premier Wen Jiabao is expected to visit India early next year. An indication to this effect was given by visiting politburo member of the Communist Party of China Liu Qi when he called on Home Minister Shivraj Patil here today, officials said. New Delhi and Beijing are working on scheduling the first meeting between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Wen on the sidelines of next week's Asean Summit in Laos, prior to the Chinese Premier's visit to India within the first quarter of 2005. The Singh-Wen meeting will be the highest-level contact between the two countries since the UPA Government assumed office in May this year. Emphasising that Sino-Indian ties must be strengthened, Liu told Patil that China regarded its relations with India as "one of the most important parts" of its foreign policy approach and wanted to resolve all outstanding issues amicably.

The Hindu, 26 November 2004

India, ASEAN may sign strategic treaty (P.S. Suryanarayana)

Singapore, Nov. 25. India and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) are likely to enter into a "partnership for peace, progress and shared prosperity" at a summit in Laos on November 30. Sources told The Hindu that "there are plans for the partnership agreement." With this, India is now poised to join China and Japan, which have signed similar pacts with

ASEAN. China and ASEAN signed a "declaration on strategic partnership for peace and prosperity" during the association's summit with several of its key dialogue partners in Bali in October, 2003. The ASEAN-Japan agreement was reached during a later commemorative summit between the two sides.

Indian Express, 27 November 2004

Indo-Asean: PM to meet Wen, Koizumi in Laos

New Delhi, Nov.26. If networking is the name of the game, then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will be in useful company when he leaves on Sunday for the third Asean-India summit in Laos. South-East Asia is becoming increasingly important to India, with foreign trade topping \$13 billion and expected to climb to nearly \$30 billion by 2007. But even as he meets Asean leaders - many of whom having just assumed power -Singh will find that the other "guests" at this gathering are no less interesting. On the cards, during his three-day visit, are meetings with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. The details are still being worked out, said Secretary East Rajiv Sikri. The Asean grouping has steadily expanded its economic partnerships, with China, Japan and South Korea being regular dialogue partners and India being invited to the summit for the third time.

The Hindu, 28 November 2004

Cuba for strengthening Non-Aligned Movement

Chennai, Nov.27. The Non-aligned Movement (NAM) is more relevant now than ever before, as developing countries have to unite and defend their interests in a unipolar world, the central committee member of the Communist Party of Cuba, Pablo Bacallo Infante, said today. He told reporters here that NAM had an important role to play in the prevailing global scenario. Though Cuba had chosen the socialist mode of development, Mr. Infante said, it always stood for strengthening and promoting the concept of non-alignment against military blocs, besides striving for closer ties with NAM countries like India, which was one of the founders of the movement. The movement needed the support of new forces, he added.

The Hindu, 28 November 2004

India-ASEAN pact finalised (P.S.Suryanarayana)

Singapore, Nov.27. The Foreign Ministers of India and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) today finalised a comprehensive partnership pact and "recommended" that the leaders of the two sides sign it at their summit in the Laotian capital, Vientiane, on November 30. The document on the ASEAN-India "Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity" was given finishing touches by the External Affairs Minister, K. Natwar Singh, and his counterparts from the 10 member-states of the association at a meeting in Vientiane. Hailing the "joint initiative," Mr. Singh later told The Hindu over phone from Vientiane that the ASEAN, which was "very supportive" of India, had also emphasised the "great expectations" on both sides.

The Tribune, 28 November 2004

Putin to visit India from Dec 3 (Girja Shankar Kaura)

New Delhi, Nov.27. Defence and strategic relations between India and Russia are expected to reach a higher plane during the three-day official visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin which will begin here from December 3. The two sides are expected to sign accords on defence cooperation and other areas of strategic concern to both the countries. An official announcement on President Putin's visit was made here by the External Affairs Ministry spokesman today. The importance which was being attached to the visit of President Putin could be gauged from the fact that just three days ahead of the official visit of the Russian President, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov would be in New Delhi to hold crucial talks with Defence Ministry officials on various accords which would be signed during the visit.

The Tribune, 28 November 2004

Ehud positive on Indo-Israel ties

Jerusalem, Nov.27. Sounding positive on the future of Indo-Israel ties, Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who is beginning a five-day visit to India from December 6, has said though there were "political differences" with India yet they would not affect mutual relations and Israel considered India as major trade target. Commenting on the recent remarks by the Left parties in India to sever all military ties with Israel, Mr Olmert said, "We have political disagreements with many of our friends and that applies to India also.... yet we don't hesitate to voice our reservations and we respect the rights of others to do the same." But that does not mean that it will affect trade and relations between Israel and the other country," he added.

Indian Express, 29 November 2004

UN hopes soar on Singh non-aligned signal (K.P.Nayar)

New York, Nov.28. As the 59th General Assembly copes with an unusually heavy agenda here in the context of unprecedented challenges to multilateralism in the backdrop of the Iraq war, there is new respect for New Delhi in the corridors of the UN, unseen since India's disastrous defeat in the election to the Security Council on October 21, 1996. India's stunning victory last month in elections to the Economic and Social Council (Ecosoc), in which it was just 17 votes short of a unanimous choice by the entire international community, has come as a shot in the arm for New Delhi's case for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. India topped the list of countries elected to four Asian seats in Ecosoc with 174 votes from among the UN's 191 members, scoring over China and leaving Pakistan way behind. UN diplomats attribute the change in India's fortunes in the world body to a return to non-aligned values being signalled by the Manmohan Singh government and renewed interest in the Third World.

Khaleej Times, 29 November 2004

Southeast Asia adopting sweeping pacts to create pan-Asian bloc with China, India

Vientiane, Laos-Southeast Asian leaders finalized visionary pacts with China and India at their summit on Monday, hoping for a pan-Asian trade bloc to rival Europe and the United States. The 10-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations was to sign an accord with China to create the world's biggest tariff-free market of nearly 2 billion people. Similar free trade areas were planned with Japan, South Korea - and a blueprint for economic cooperation with India was to be signed before the end of the two-day summit Tuesday. "An enlarged east Asian bloc can secure not only the future of the developing and less-developing countries of ASEAN, but also the future of China, Japan and Korea," Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said ahead of the summit. Add India to the mix, and it will create a "formidable regional grouping" to stand against the European Union and the Americas, she said.

The Hindu, 29 November 2004

Catching up in the east (N.Ram)

Vientiane, Nov.28. India's 'Look East' policy - for which political foundations were actually laid half a century ago - took off far too late considering the tremendous economic development that has taken place in this part of the world. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's three-day visit to Vientiane, Laos for the 3rd India-ASEAN Summit is an essay in making up for lost time. India, whose "Look East" policy was launched around 1991, became a sectoral dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1992, a full dialogue partner in 1995, and a member of the ARF in 1996. After intensive efforts to achieve parity with China, Japan, and South Korea in the ASEAN scheme of partnerships, India became a summit level partner only in 2002. India's trade with ASEAN is now in the region of \$13 billion, and the target is \$15 billion for 2005 and \$30 billion for 2007. The third ASEAN-India summit will take place on Tuesday amidst a criss-cross of summits (actually ten) held alongside the main event, the 10th ASEAN summit. Its highlight will be the signing of the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity.

The Tribune, 30 November 2004

Summit for framing Asean Charter (T.R.Ramachandran)

Vientiane, Nov.29. The 10th Asean Summit today adopted the 10-point Vientiane Action Programme (VAP) focussing on "outward looking external relation strategies" with Dialogue partners along with recognising the need for framing an Asean Charter. Acknowledging that Asean has to work within a new strategic concept as the global and regional economic environment is continuously challenged, the summitters pledged to narrow the development gap among member countries by boosting the initiative for Asean integration. This will be in keeping with Asean's Vision 2020 by setting concrete milestones to accomplish a comprehensive Asean Community based on political and security cooperation, economic integration and socio-cultural cooperation with the object of forming the Asean Security Community.

Deccan Chronicle, 30 November 2004

Japan to aid Indian projects

Vientiane (Laos), Nov. 29. Japan on Monday agreed in principle to assist India in setting up mega projects similar to the multi-crore Delhi metro rail aimed at easing traffic congestion in the Capital. The agreement was reached at a meeting Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had with his Japanese counterpart Junichiro Koizumi, External Affairs Ministry Secretary (East) Rajiv Sikri told reporters. The proposal for Japanese assistance for a few more "high visibility projects" was mooted by Singh, upon which Koizumi agreed that there was potential for more such projects, Sikri said. At the meeting, which took place on the second day of Singh's three-day visit here to attend Tuesday's Third India-Asean Summit, he pointed out that there was more Japanese business presence in Mumbai in the 19th century than today. The Japanese Prime Minister, who had recently suggested the setting up of an "Asian arc of prosperity", stretching from India to Japan and covering Asean, said the focus of his country as well as of the world was on India's economic potential.