

The Hindu, 1 November 2006

Hungary's Foreign Minister to visit India, Pak.

Budapest, Nov 1: The Hungarian Foreign Minister will leave on Thursday to visit both India and Pakistan for talks on Hungary's economic and political ties with the two South Asian countries, the Ministry said. Kinga Goncez planned to be traveling for a week during her tour, starting first in India, where she would focus talks on strengthening Hungary's ties with the country, the ministry said. Meetings were scheduled with Indian leaders including Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, President A P J Abdul Kalam and Congress chief Sonia Gandhi. "We would like to secure our position in a country, which by 2025, according to analysts, will without a doubt be turning into one of the global powers in the fields of economy and politics," Erno Bohar, the Foreign Ministry's director general, told reporters. Goncez planned to travel November six to Pakistan, and would be the first Hungarian Foreign Minister to make an official visit to the country...

Hindustan Times, 1 November 2006

India high on EU investment focus, with spate of visits

New Delhi, October 31: A spate of very high level visits by leaders from several European Union nations, including Belgium, Norway, Britain and Hungary, has placed India firmly in the international spotlight, with the economy and trade and investment the focus of most visits. The EU is India's largest bloc trading partner. Aiming to enhance bilateral ties in diverse fields, Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt will begin a six-day visit to India from Thursday, the highlight of which is a landmark Social Security Agreement, that will particularly benefit Indians living in Belgium. According to Belgian Ambassador Patrick De Beyter, the "unique" agreement will be fruitful for Indians in Belgium, as they will receive benefits like pension. During his first ever visit to India, Verhofstadt will hold talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on a wide range of issues, particularly covering Indo-US civil nuclear deal, terrorism and trade and investment. There will also be an agreement on space...

Hindustan Times, 1 November 2006

Neighbours like these - Manoj Joshi

Even as a coalition government reaches the mid-point of its five-year term in India, and its economic growth settles around a handsome 8 per cent, our neighbours " east, west, north and south" are seriously dysfunctional. In Nepal, a ceasefire between the Maoists and a government headed by a seven-party alliance has been extended. Many promises have been made on all sides, but there is little action on the ground to end the crisis that followed the launch of the Maoist armed struggle in 1996. In Bangladesh, a caretaker government has taken office, but there is nothing to suggest they are anywhere near resolving the gridlock between the two Begums. The breakdown of peace talks between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government means the prognosis for the immediate future is a creeping conflict, if not all-out war. Events in Pakistan are unfolding at a somewhat slower pace. The Pak-Afghan border situation remains grim, and within Pakistan there appears little effort to bring the two major political forces, the PPP and the PML(Nawaz) back into the mainstream...

Hindustan Times, 1 November 2006

India hopes for free and fair elections in Bangladesh

Dhaka, November 1: Reiterating confidence in the democratic traditions of Bangladesh, India has expressed the hope that the country would be able to hold "free and fair elections consistent with constitutional guidelines" in January. Outgoing Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri expressed these sentiments while calling on Awami League chief and former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as Bangladesh began settling down to governance by an interim government after four days of political violence. "We value the democratic norms of Bangladesh. As a neighbour we are following closely the developments here. We are sure that Bangladeshi people are committed towards democracy and democratic tradition," Sikri was quoted by New Age newspaper on Wednesday as saying. Sikri had also called on former prime minister and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chief Khaleda Zia before the latter quit office. While India has been cautious, US envoy Patricia Butenis, who also met Hasina, told media persons later that the four-day time given by the main opposition to the new administration was "not enough" to fulfil the list of 11 "demands". She appealed for more time before the Awami League-led alliance launched a stir...

The Hindu, 2 November 2006

India has positive attitude towards Nepal talks: Maoists

Kathmandu, Nov 2.: India has shown a positive attitude towards the peace talks in Nepal and has pledged its support to make them successful, the Maoists have said after their leader Prachanda met Indian Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee. The talks between the two here on Tuesday night were focused on mustering India's goodwill in making the ongoing peace talks successful, senior Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai, who accompanied Prachanda, to the meeting said. "India has shown a positive gesture towards the ongoing peace talks and has pledged to support in any possible way to make the talks successful," Bhattarai was quoted as saying by The Rising Nepal. "India is Nepal's immediate neighbour and it would naturally have a prominent role in assisting the peace process," he told reporters after the meeting. "We intend to seek India's goodwill rather than seek its direct involvement and assistance," he said...

Hindustan Times, 2 November 2006

Foreign policy same, says PM

Thiruvananthapuram, November 1: Allaying the apprehension of the Left parties, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on Wednesday that his government has no plan of deviating from India's basic foreign policy. India wanted good relations with big powers like the US, Russia and China, but that could not be construed as a policy shift followed from the days of the country's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Singh said while dismissing the impression that renewed efforts to improve ties with the US marked a radical shift in the foreign policy. "Sometimes confusion is sought to be created that there will be a change in the foreign policy. It is not true. In terms of our basic objective, there is no change," Singh told a Congress convention at the Pradesh Congress Committee headquarters here. Throughout his speech, the PM took pain to explain that his government has no intention of dumping the time-tested foreign policies...

Hindustan Times, 2 November 2006

India set to supply food to Jaffna but...

Colombo, November 1: India is all set to supply food to the beleaguered and starving Jaffna, but the unresolved issues of transport and security are holding up movement, an official source in New Delhi told Hindustan Times. India has made it clear to the Sri Lankans that they will have to arrange vessels to carry the cargo and also guarantee their security. In September itself, New Delhi had lifted the ban on the export of sugar and dhal and offered Sri Lanka a one-time supply of 6,000 tonnes of sugar and 2,000 tonnes of dhal to help Colombo tide over the crisis in Jaffna which was precipitated by the war and the closure of the A9 main supply route from the south. Given the huge controversy over the "food drop" which preceded the Indian military intervention in Sri Lanka in July 1987, India did not want to take the food to Jaffna itself. It wanted the Sri Lankan government or Sri Lankan private traders or an international agency, to undertake transport and distribution...

The Hindu, 3 November 2006

Indian Navy team to train in US

London, Nov. 3 (PTI): The Indian Navy has sent some 300 personnel to the US to train up and sail back with the 35-year-old Austin-class platform landing dock, USS Trenton acquired by India, a leading defence weekly reported today. The crew are now undergoing training at the US Navy base in Norfolk, Virginia, before taking over the 17,000-tonne ship once it is decommissioned from the US Navy next January. The crew will then aim to return to India by May 2007, Jane's Defence weekly said, quoting a spokesman of the Indian Navy. At 174-m long, Trenton will be the Indian Navy's second largest warship after the Hermes-class aircraft carrier 'INS Viraat' and the first military purchase from the US after the two countries entered into a strategic partnership in 2005. Trenton cost India Rs 2.18 billion (USD 48.44 million) under the US government's foreign military sales programme and includes the provision of four LCM8 landing craft.

Hindustan Times, 3 November 2006

New Indian envoy to Pak takes charge

Islamabad, November 2: India's new High Commissioner to Pakistan, Satyabrata Pal, assumed charge of his responsibilities on Thursday, a day after arriving in the Pakistan capital. Pal takes over from present Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon. Pal is expected to establish contacts with Pakistani officials before leaving for New Delhi to take part in the Foreign Secretary level talks to be held on November 14 and 15. Pal was earlier India's Ambassador to South Africa and Deputy High Commissioner in London before assuming his present charge.

Hindustan Times, 3 November 2006

India, UK to cooperate over terrorism, climate change

New Delhi, November 2: India and Britain on Thursday decided to step up cooperation to tackle threats posed by terrorism and climate change besides boosting the already buoyant bilateral economic relations. British Foreign Minister, Margaret Beckett, after emerging from a meeting with External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said they had constructive discussions on bilateral India-UK relationship, important global challenges

and opportunities and regional and security issues, including counter terrorism. She added that bilateral relationship between the two countries had never been better. Later, after a meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh she dwelt on the importance the two countries were giving to adopting new, cleaner technologies to harness energy. Beckett said the Indian PM and she acknowledged the links between energy and climate security as highlighted by the Stern Review. The Review is a report prepared by the head of British Government's Economic Services, Sir Nicholas Stern, which says that tackling climate change now will be cheaper than the cost of inaction...

Hindustan Times, 3 November 2006

India not behind attack on envoy: Pak

Colombo, November 2: The new Pakistani High Commissioner in Sri Lanka Air Vice Marshal Shazad Chaudhry said on Wednesday, that his government never accused India of engineering the attempt on the life of his predecessor, Brig Bashir Wali Mohamund, on August 14 this year. "The Government of Pakistan never made such a statement. I do not know why local media gave huge publicity to it," Daily Mirror quotes Chaudhry as saying. He was referring to Bashir Wali Mohamand's allegation in a local magazine interview that the Indian agency RAW was behind the bomb attack on him. A claymore mine planted in a parked three-wheeler had exploded killing some security personnel while the envoy's car was passing through a crowded street in central Colombo. The envoy himself escaped unhurt. High Commissioner Shazad Chaudhry said that Pakistan would leave it to the Sri Lankan agencies to investigate the attack...

The Hindu, 6 November 2006

China mulls FTA talks with India: official

Beijing, November 6: China is considering the possibility of establishing a free trade area (FTA) with India, a senior official with the Ministry of Commerce has said. "Following the reopening of the trade post on the Indian-Chinese border, our government is considering FTA talks with India," assistant minister of commerce Fu Ziyang said at the weekend at the 2007 China Industrial Development Forum in Beijing. "We have to follow economic globalization trends and push for the liberalization and facilitation of trade," he said. China is currently holding FTA talks with Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Pakistan as well as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). With a combined population of 1.7 billion, the China-ASEAN FTA will be the biggest FTA in the world when it becomes operational in 2010. A FTA between China and India, the world's most and second most populous nations, would benefit as many as 2.4 billion people...

The Hindu, 6 November 2006

Progress made in boundary talks: China

Beijing: Ahead of Chinese President Hu Jintao's maiden visit to India, Beijing has expressed satisfaction over its upgraded strategic ties with New Delhi and said there has been "progress" on the boundary issue. "Boundary negotiations have made progress and border areas have remained peaceful and tranquil," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in its latest issue of 'China's Foreign Affairs 2006.' The annual report of the Ministry did not elaborate on the nature of "progress" made during talks between special representatives

since New Delhi and Beijing signed the agreement on the 'Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the China-India Boundary Question' in 2005. However, it noted that the signing of the agreement during Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to India last year marked the "successful conclusion" of the first phase of negotiations on the framework for settling the boundary question. The unsettled boundary question will be one of the major topics for discussion when the Indian leadership holds talks with Mr. Hu, also general secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), when he visits India from November 20...

The Hindu, 6 November 2006

India agrees to supply relief goods

COLOMBO: India has agreed to a recent request by the Sri Lanka Government for supply of relief goods to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the north and east. According to sources in the Sri Lankan Government, the request was made following a humanitarian crisis, particularly in the Jaffna peninsula, after closure of the A-9 highway on August 11. Citing closure of A-9 and the consequent crisis, the LTTE refused to have further talks with the Government at the Geneva-II round on October 28 and 29. The Government has so far not agreed to the demand from various quarters to re-open the highway on the ground that it would jeopardise national security. Sources said New Delhi in response to a request from Colombo has agreed to a 'one-time help' to supply rice, dal, sugar and milk powder. The quantum of the commodities and the modalities of their transport are yet to be worked out...

Hindustan Times, 6 November 2006

Centre considering Myanmar gas pipeline via Tripura

Agartala, November 6: The central government is considering a proposal by Tripura to lay a sub-line to link the planned India-Myanmar gas pipeline for transporting natural gas. Union Minister of State for Commerce Jairam Ramesh said Tripura's proposal for a 160-km link pipeline for transporting natural gas from Myanmar was being considered. "I was told by the minister (Ramesh) that the government was considering our proposal for the link pipeline," Tripura Industry and Commerce Minister Tapan Chakraborty said. "Once the link pipeline is built, Tripura will be able to export its surplus gas to the rest of the country or can even use the gas from Myanmar to set up gas-based plants in the state." India is pushing the \$3-billion pipeline plan to import gas from Myanmar through Mizoram and Tripura. "After the Bangladesh government refused to allow its territory for the tri-nation project, the Indian petroleum ministry has chalked out a plan to lay the pipeline via the Northeast and north Bengal," said a senior Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) official...

The Hindu, 8 November 2006

Technical aids may replace soldiers at posts along the LAC

BUM-LA (Line of Actual Control): With reduction of tension along the border with China, technical aids could replace soldiers at posts set up in hostile weather conditions, according to senior Army officials responsible for border management. The Army and the Indian Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) man the observation posts and carry out patrols in high winds and temperatures up to minus 40 degrees centigrade. Asked whether in the

rarefied air that leads to memory loss, border management was possible through electronic aids, commanding officer of the "Korea Brigade" Brig. Sanjay Kulkarni said: "All this [border post meeting] is towards that end. Once peace and tranquillity prevail, what you are saying might become true."...

The Hindu, 8 November 2006

Hu's visit a chance to "enhance political trust"

Beijing: Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to India from November 20-23 will be an opportunity to "enhance political trust" and to "show the world that the common development of both countries is not only important bilaterally but also significant for world peace, development and prosperity," said Cui Tiankui, China's Assistant Foreign Minister, at a press briefing here on Tuesday. He said Mr. Hu's visit was particularly momentous in that it was the first such trip to India by a Chinese President in a decade. Mr. Cui added that Beijing hoped the visit would serve to take forward the strategic and cooperative partnership established following Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to New Delhi in April 2005. He said "active progress" was taking place in solving the boundary dispute and that following the announcement of the political parameters and guiding principles for resolution of the border issue, "exploration has started on the details of a framework agreement."

Hindustan Times, 8 November 2006

India welcomes Maoists-Nepal Govt agreement

New Delhi, November 8: Welcoming the agreement between Nepalese government and Maoists, India today termed it as a "victory" for the people of Himalayan country and hoped it would place the nation on path of peace, stability and economic recovery. External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said India stands ready to extend its full support to the efforts of the government and people of Nepal. The "decisions" taken by the leadership of the seven party alliance led by Prime Minister GP Koirala and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) are a "victory for the people of Nepal," Mukherjee said in a statement in the national capital...

The Hindu, 9 November 2006

India, Guyana sign accords

GEORGE TOWN (GUYANA): India on Wednesday signed four agreements with Guyana to qualitatively upgrade "constructive cooperation." The agreements, signed in the presence of Vice-President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and Guyana President Bharrat Jagdeo here, were aimed at boosting the cultural exchanges, promoting diplomatic facilities and academic exchanges and extending the Line of Credit. After a one-on-one meeting with Mr. Jagdeo, Mr. Shekhawat said "constructive cooperation" would be of mutual advantage to both sides. The agreement on promotion of cultural exchanges for 2007-09 would allow sharing of resource personnel and information. On the diplomatic front, the two sides signed an accord that provides for family members, particularly spouses of diplomatic, consular, administrative and technical staff of the diplomatic mission of Guyana and India, to seek employment. In an effort to boost cultural exchanges, a memorandum of understanding was inked for setting up a Rabindranath Tagore Resource Centre in Guyana University.

The Hindu, 9 November 2006

Jindal makes it again

Washington : India-born Republican Bobby Jindal on Wednesday made it to the U.S. House of Representatives from Louisiana for the second straight term, securing 88 per cent of the votes cast. His victory in 2004 ended a five decades-drought for Indian Americans in the House even as several other prominent members of the community were quite successful politically at the State level. Jindal's success, however, could not be replicated by maverick Republican challenger in Pennsylvania Raj Peter Bhakta, who got only 34 per cent of the votes in the 13th District against his Democratic incumbent, who received 66 per cent.

Hindustan Times, 9 November 2006

Indo-US nuclear bill could pass next week: Mulford

New Delhi, November 9: The US on Thursday sought to downplay fears of a Democratic victory in congressional elections affecting the Indo-US civil nuclear deal and expressed optimism that the nuclear legislation will be passed in the lame duck session of the Senate next week. In the same breath, the US admitted that there was still a great deal of uncertainty, and if the nuclear bill failed to win the Senate vote this year, the whole Congressional process will have to start all over again when the new Congress meets in January next year. "There is widespread bipartisan support for the Indo-US relations in general and the nuclear deal in particular. It is a positive situation," US ambassador to India David C Mulford told reporters in New Delhi. "Chances are quite favourable" that the Senate will vote out the nuclear bill in the lame duck session, Mulford said in response to a question...

Hindustan Times, 9 November 2006

India backs two-state solution in Palestine

United Nations, November 9: India has reaffirmed its commitment to a negotiated two-state solution agreed between the parties that would result in a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian state existing side by side with Israel in peace and security. "We regard the Roadmap, as the framework for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," Indian delegate Shatrughan Sinha said during a UN general assembly committee debate on the Palestine issue. Urging adoption of urgent measures to improve security and the humanitarian and economic conditions of the Palestinian people, he said India supports the call of the UN Secretary-General to consider innovative ways by all sides in order to take steps to fully implement the roadmap. This would lead to, without delay, a fair, stable and equitable solution to the conflict based on relevant UN resolutions, including Security Council resolutions, Sinha said...

The Hindu, 10 November 2006

Kanishka: enquiry to be delayed

Toronto: A public enquiry into the 1985 Air India flight bombing is facing an unexpected delay as lawyers sift through two decades of documents and figure out what should remain secret for national security reasons. The Commission's counsel Mark Freiman said they would have to postpone until February the testimony of many key witnesses, who were scheduled to begin appearing at hearings this month.

The Hindu, 10 November 2006

Worries about India-China economic ties - Pallavi Aiyar

Trade between India and China is set to cross the \$20 billion mark by the end of this year. But recent moves to subject Chinese investments to special security clearances have come as a dampener. The overall positive assessment of the India-China relationship in the new century has largely been sustained by the booming bilateral trade. Bilateral trade is set to cross the \$20 billion mark by the end of this year and steady streams of business delegations have begun to cross the border with an eye to investment. To some analysts this is proof that Bangalore and Shanghai rather than New Delhi and Beijing will shape the future of relations between two of the world's fastest growing economies. But even as Chinese President Hu Jintao gets ready to make his maiden visit to India, recent moves by New Delhi towards subjecting Chinese investments to special security clearances have cast a question mark over the future of bilateral economic ties...

Hindustan Times, 10 November 2006

Time not right for PM's visit to Pak: Farooq Abdullah

Jammu, November 9: Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah cautioned Prime Minister Manmohan Singh rushing to Islamabad as the "atmosphere is not conducive" for his visit to Pakistan. He was also afraid that there was a real fear that visit in these circumstances of "deep mistrust" may end as yet another diplomatic disaster like Agra summit of July 2001. He said that this visit should be undertaken only after the 2007 elections outcome is known in Pakistan. At the moment, there is a huge hope that once the two leaders meet, there would be something great coming out of it. Since Pakistan is undergoing troubled times and President Musharraf is under "lot of pressure from Jihadis that he should not concede anything to India on Kashmir, any hope-fulfilling outcome is unlikely."...

The Hindu, 13 November 2006

India hopeful of nuclear deal

Kolkata, Nov. 13 (PTI): India yesterday expressed hope that the Indo-US civil nuclear deal would be passed by the US Senate despite the change of power equation in the Congress following victory by the Democrats. "I hope the bill on civil nuclear agreement will be passed by the Senate," External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said here referring to the fate of the bill following electoral reverses in the US Congress. The Senate is likely to meet for the 'lame-duck' session this week and expectedly consider the bill on civil nuclear agreement that provides for allowing nuclear trade between India and the US. The House of Representatives has already passed the bill but the Senate could not consider it as its term expired. Optimistic Mukherjee hoped that there would not be any change in the Indo-US relations following the change in power equation in the Congress...

Hindustan Times, 13 November 2006

FBI gets mail, India goes on hijack alert

New Delhi, November 12: Airports across the country were put on high alert on Sunday, following a warning sent out by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) about a possible hijack attempt on flights from India bound for the United States. A security

cordon was immediately placed around the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport at Delhi and all vehicles entering were checked. Vehicles were not allowed to stop in front of the terminals for more than a couple of minutes. Even airport employees were stopped for identity verification. The baggage of airline employees was also checked. A top security official, who did not wish to be identified, said the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) had issued an advisory to the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to put in place more stringent security measures at all airports. The BCAS is the regulatory authority for civil aviation security in India, while the CISF manages security at airports across the country...

Hindustan Times, 13 November 2006

India-China trade to touch \$30 billion by '09: FICCI

New Delhi, November 12: There is a need for India to diversify its export basket to China to tap the benefits of growing bilateral trade, which is poised to reach a level of \$30 billion by 2009, says a study carried out by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). In a paper on deepening the economic engagement between India and China, FICCI said that while India's exports to China are largely restricted to primary and resource-based products, Chinese exports to India are fairly diversified and include manufactured items as well as low and medium technology products. India's exports to China are highly concentrated with top three items- ores, slag and ash; iron ore; and plastics, accounting for 71 per cent of the total exports...

Hindustan Times, 13 November 2006

India steps up lobbying among NSG for nuke deal

New Delhi, November 12: As efforts to plough the civil nuclear deal through the US Congressional processes continue, India has stepped up lobbying with Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) countries and found the positive response increasing among the member countries. Besides taking up the matter with NSG members individually, New Delhi also made a presentation at a special session of the 45-nation grouping in Vienna last month and received "very good feedback". Shyam Saran, India's Special Envoy on the nuclear deal, recently undertook a visit to Sweden, Norway and Ireland, which have strong views on non-proliferation and had initially reservations with regard to the deal. The deal, clinched in March this year during the visit of US President George W Bush, is aimed at enabling India to have civil nuclear trade with the international community after 32 years. The NSG is required to change its guidelines for international trade in nuclear field to allow that cooperation...

Hindustan Times, 14 November 2006

Minister non-committal on FTA during Hu's India visit

New Delhi, November 13 : India and China are yet to finalise a free trade agreement (FTA), but there is hope of a broader regional trade pact during Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit later this month, an Indian minister said on Monday. "I am unable to commit if FTA is possible. But we will definitely consider a broader regional trade agreement (RTA)," said Minister of State for Industry Ashwani Kumar while addressing a meet organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) to launch a study on trade potential between the two countries. "We need greater India-China engagement to dispel

some of the contentious issues."Kumar shared the analysis of the CII that greater synergy between the two countries could help boost bilateral trade to reach \$30 billion by 2009-10 and \$50 billion by 2010-11 from current levels of over \$17.5 billion...

HIndustan Times, 14 November 2006

Indo-US nuclear deal gets top billing in lame duck session

Washington, November 14:The Indo-US nuclear deal was listed as a top priority for the US Congress as it opened a lame duck session in a new spirit of bipartisanship after the defeat of the Republicans in last week's elections.As the senate met on Monday afternoon, leaders of the losing Republicans and winning Democrats listed their own priorities, but when it rose for the day in the evening, both sides had agreed on three items for this week: keeping the government in operating funds, voting on a trade agreement with Vietnam and approving the India deal.Current Majority Leader Bill Frist, a presidential aspirant in 2008, urged Republicans not to be discouraged by this "time of transition" - and to listen to the voters who ousted them from power...

HIndustan Times, 14 November 2006

Arunachal Pradesh is ours, not China's: Pranab

New Delhi, November 14:India on Wednesday rejected China's claim that Arunachal Pradesh was Chinese territory."Arunachal is an integral part of India," External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee told reporters in New Delhi, a day after Chinese Ambassador Sun Yuxi claimed that the east Indian state was "Chinese territory".The Chinese Ambassador had told a news channel, "In our position, the whole of Arunachal Pradesh is Chinese territory and Tawang is only one place in it...We are claiming whole of that (Arunachal Pradesh). That is our position."The two countries are currently engaged in talks to resolve the boundary question. Last year, they signed the 'Political Parameters and Guiding Principles' to resolve the border issue...

HIndustan Times, 14 November 2006

Pakistan pitches for Siachen

New Delhi, November 13:On the eve of the foreign secretary-level talks, Pakistan said resolution of the Siachen issue is a "matter of days" as the two countries have been able to narrow down their differences to such a level.'All I can tell you is that we are very near. There are differences but these can be bridged by political will,' Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri told NDTV."Given the political will, we have narrowed down our differences enough for us to have a decision within a matter of days, not even a week," he added.However, informed sources told HT that there are still differences between India and Pakistan on the authentication of the existing position of troops on either side before disengagement.India is for this authentication but Pakistan has not responded positively so far at the defence-secretary level talks, despite assurances at the highest level.Kasuri also said 'tangible' progress is necessary during the deliberations as failure to reach any agreement will demoralise people in both countries. 'We hope that as a result of this meeting, we will, in the spirit of the Havana declaration, see narrowing of divergences and building on convergences,' he said.

The Hindu, 16 November 2006

India, Pakistan to hold quarterly flag meetings

NEW DELHI: At the end of the two-day Foreign Secretary-level talks on Wednesday, India and Pakistan agreed to hold quarterly flag meetings of local Army commanders, besides initialling an agreement on reducing the risks from accidents relating to nuclear weapons. "They exchanged views on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir in the spirit of the Havana joint press statement [of September 16] to hold purposeful discussions ... they agreed to fully implement measures to enhance interaction and cooperation across the LoC [Line of Control], including the early operationalisation of [a] truck service for trade on agreed items," a joint statement said. It was decided that "all fishermen and prisoners" of the "other country," whose national status stands confirmed and who have completed their sentences, would be released by December 25...

Hindustan Times, 16 November 2006

Indian security tense over protests against Hu

New Delhi, November 16: With China insisting it does not want any Tibetan protest during President Hu Jintao's four-day visit to India next week and the Tibetans determined to prove a point, Indian security agencies are in a tizzy. "We are trying to make sure Hu's visit is not marred by protests. But considering that Tibetan demonstrators have an uncanny ability of sneaking past cordons in two's and three's and holding impromptu sit-ins, we are taking all precautions," a senior security official said. Already, New Delhi has served Tenzin Tsundue, a Tibetan poet and general secretary of Friends of Tibet group, with an order barring him from leaving the town of Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh until November 25. The hill town is home to the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader...

Hindustan Times, 16 November 2006

We will never allow India to overtake economically: China

Beijing, November 16: China has dismissed global forecasts that a democratic India will overtake the Communist giant on the economic front by 2020, saying those predictions lacked "statistical evidence". "There is a prevailing belief in the international community that India will overtake China by 2020. This statement lacks statistical evidence," Secretary-General of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), Wang Jinzhen said. "Both are moving towards prosperity. Reform and opening up in China began in 1978 which prompted rapid economic growth. India also launched reform measures in 1991, which followed a policy of liberalisation and globalisation," he said. "China and India are following two very different development models," Jinzhen said when asked to comment on the findings of the World Economic Forum 2006 global competitiveness rankings, which placed China 11 places behind India...

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The Hindu, 17 November 2006

Indo-US deal: US Govt. to push for further progress

New Delhi, Nov. 17 (PTI): The United States today said that the passage of Indo-US nuclear deal bill by the Senate showed that the agreement has in principle been maintained and voiced confidence that the administration will do its best to achieve further progress keeping in mind New Delhi's sensitivities. "...It is clear to us that the result is very favourable and that the agreement has in principle been maintained," US Ambassador here, David C Mulford, told NDTV after the Senate approved the measure by an overwhelming majority. "Well, I am not surprised that the bill was overwhelmingly supported by both parties. The vote is a little bit larger than I thought of what might be, but certainly we expected to achieve an overwhelming bipartisan support for this bill," he said. Observing that the 'killer amendments' were defeated in the Senate, Mulford said the

bill will now go to the Congress to be reconciled with the version passed earlier by the House of Representatives."Both bills fall within the parameters, within the spheres that there is any doubt in our mind, but we know there are sensitivities in India on some of the issues and in particular things like reporting requirements...

The Hindu, 17 November 2006

"Industry, Govt. not yet ready for FTA with China"

New Delhi, Nov. 17 (PTI): A slew of trade and investment agreements will be signed between India and China during the visit of Chinese President, Hu Jintao, even though the Indian government and industry are not yet ready for a Free Trade Agreement between the two Asian giants."A Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (BIPA) and two protocols on easing the export procedures for rice and iron ore to China will be signed during President's visit starting November 20," official sources said. The Cabinet has already cleared BIPA, which will be in force for 10 years.However, the Chinese insistence for speeding up an FTA has met with resistance from the government and the industry.For studying the feasibility of an FTA, a Joint Task Force comprising officials and businessmen from both sides has been set up. "The task force has met twice and is expected to hold two more meetings to finalise its report by October next year," sources said...

The Hindu, 17 November 2006

Don't slacken operations against Taliban, India tells US

New Delhi, Nov. 17 (PTI): Concerned over stepped up activities by Taliban and Al Qaeda, India has told the United States any slackening of operations against these forces could be detrimental to security in the South Asian region."We have registered India's concerns conveyed at the high-level defence policy group meeting here," a senior visiting Defence Department official said."Speculation about the will of NATO or US is sagging are far from truth," top Pentagon official said making it clear that Washington had assured New Delhi that the Bush administration, despite changes in the contours of the US Congress was committed to "succeed in Afghanistan".On whether New Delhi had also expressed concern over the reported compromise reached between Taliban forces operating from Afghan-Pak border and Islamabad, the official replied in affirmative merely saying that Washington was taking up this with the Pakistani authorities...

Hindustan Times, 17 November 2006

Karzai, Manmohan to meet on Nov 17

New Delhi, November 16:Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai, who is currently in India on a four-day visit to inaugurate the Second Regional Economic Cooperation Conference (RECC) on Afghanistan on November 18, will meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday and discuss bilateral and regional matters.Karzai, who arrived in India on Wednesday and went to Shimla on a private visit, is accompanied by seven Cabinet Ministers and Ministerial-level advisers, in addition to members of Afghan National Assembly, officials and a high-level business delegation.He will also call on President APJ Abdul Kalam and meet other dignitaries.During the visit, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Karzai will jointly inaugurate the Second RECC on Afghanistan on November 18...

Hindustan Times, 17 November 2006

India to sign investment protection agreement with China

New Delhi, November 16: India and China are all set to sign an Investment Protection Agreement during the high profile visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to New Delhi later this month. The proposal to enter into such an agreement was cleared by the Union Cabinet on Thursday. "The Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement will lead to a rise in investments between China and India and will be in force for 10 years," Information and Broadcasting Minister Priyaranjan Dasmunsi told reporters after the meeting. Trade between the two countries has been growing rapidly over the last few years. Bilateral trade is expected to touch \$20 billion (Rs 9,000 crore) during this financial year rising from \$18.7 billion in 2005-06. Other countries with whom India has similar bilateral investment protection agreements include Britain, Russia, Germany, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Spain and Thailand...

The Hindu, 18 November 2006

India gets EU support for farmers' protection in WTO

New Delhi, Nov 18. (PTI): The European Union on Friday supported India's demand for safeguarding interests of its subsistence farmers in the WTO talks, while seeking joint clarification from the US on how the Farm Bill would impact the troubled Doha Round of negotiations. "We are seeking clarification from the partner countries, particularly from the US, as to how the Doha negotiations will interact with next year's Farm Bill," EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson told reporters here after his extensive discussions with Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath. Mr Nath, who has been waging a tough trade war, particularly against the US on protecting India's vulnerable agriculture through the window of Special Products (SPs), received support from the EU Trade Commissioner...

The Hindu, 18 November 2006

U.S. Senate gives the nod for nuclear deal

Washington, November 18: The landmark India-United States civilian nuclear deal on Friday crossed a major hurdle, with the Senate overwhelmingly approving legislation to implement it and rejecting five "killer" amendments, including one seeking a cap on India's fissile material production. The Bill was adopted 85-12 by the 100-member Republican-controlled Senate after an intense daylong debate, handing President George W. Bush an important diplomatic victory. The nuclear agreement, clinched on March 2 during Mr. Bush's India visit, will allow the U.S. to have civilian nuclear trade and technology with India and pave the way for the international community to have nuclear cooperation with the country. An agreement for the deal was reached between Mr. Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on July 18 last year...

The Hindu, 18 November 2006

Still a long way for deal to become reality: Manmohan

New Delhi: Welcoming the passage of a bill by the U.S. Senate on the civilian nuclear deal, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday said there was still a long way to go for the pact to become "a living reality." Aspects of the two bills passed by the U.S. House of

Representatives and the Senate were "not identical," and the process of reconciling them would "have to take on board our concerns," Dr. Singh said at the Hindustan Times Leadership Summit here. "I welcome the decision of the U.S. Senate to approve the bill. Before that, the House of Representatives has done a similar thing," he said. "But we still have a long way to go before nuclear cooperation between India and the U.S. becomes a living reality." U.S. President George W. Bush assured him that he would work to ensure that the final version of the legislation was in conformity with the July 18, 2005 agreement and the March 2, 2006 separation plan, Dr. Singh said...

The Hindu, 18 November 2006

U.S. Senate rejects "killer" amendments

Washington: Five "killer" amendments that had the potential to wreck the India-United States civilian nuclear deal, including one that sought a cap on fissile material production, were defeated in the U.S. Senate, which overwhelmingly approved the accord. Wisconsin Democrat Russ Feingold proposed an amendment that required a pre-condition of Presidential determinations that the nuclear cooperation does nothing to assist, encourage or induce India to manufacture and acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The amendment was defeated by a margin of 71 votes to 25 votes, after a spirited debate on the floor involving Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Richard Lugar. Another amendment proposed by California Democrat Barbara Boxer required India to suspend military cooperation with Iran and was defeated by a bipartisan vote of 59 votes to 38 votes...

The Hindu, 18 November 2006

India, Russia want Iran issue solved through talks

NEW DELHI: India and Russia on Friday agreed that the Iranian nuclear issue, now before the United Nations Security Council, should be resolved through negotiations. During a joint press interaction with the visiting Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov here, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said Iran had the right to pursue its nuclear programme for peaceful, civilian use. As a signatory to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, Tehran must fulfil its obligations and ensure that its nuclear programme was for peaceful purposes. "Coercion or application of force is not the answer to resolve issues," Mr. Mukherjee said, without referring to the threats hurled time and again by the United States at Iran. Mr. Lavrov said the Security Council's job must be to help and not replace the International Atomic Energy Agency when it came to dealing with Iran. The Council should help in resolving the issue rather than "punishing" Iran...

Hindustan Times, 18 November 2006

No country can affect our ties with India: Iran

New Delhi, November 17: Unfazed by the growing proximity between New Delhi and Washington, Iran on Friday said its relations with India would remain unaffected by any third country and indicated support to India's quest for civil nuclear energy. "We are working to build on our very good relations with India. We do not want to have good relations with India that will be against any third country. We don't want that," Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said. "At the same time, Iran and India will not allow a third country to negatively affect our good relations," he said when asked whether

he thought growing Indo-US relations could have an impact on ties between Tehran and New Delhi...

The Hindu, 18 November 2006

Editorial :The Senate vote and beyond

By voting overwhelmingly in favour of the draft law authorising civil nuclear cooperation with India, the United States Senate has underscored the broad, bipartisan nature of support the Bush administration's policies towards New Delhi enjoy in Washington. By any yardstick, 85 to 12 is a handsome margin. It augurs well for the next stage in the legislative process when the Senate and the House of Representatives are expected jointly to adopt a harmonised version of the final law ' before the year is out. As matters stand, the two houses of Congress have passed somewhat different texts, and there are elements in both that India has officially expressed its discomfort with. Among these are provisions for intrusive end-use verification by the U.S. of nuclear plant, equipment, and technology sold to India; and these go beyond the requirement of normal IAEA safeguards. India is also not thrilled about the prospect of the U.S. President being asked to certify Indian compliance every year ' or about the explicit and unwarranted exclusion of reprocessing and enrichment technology...

The Hindu, 18 November 2006

India and China: reassessing relations - Pallavi Aiyar

EVEN AS China has become a "model" that India's political and business classes look to emulate whether it comes to special economic zones or urban planning, until recently the Chinese were usually too busy benchmarking themselves against the Americans to pay their southern neighbour much attention. But as Chinese President Hu Jintao gets ready to make his first official visit to India on November 20, India-watchers in China argue that a major shift in Beijing's assessment of its southern neighbour is ongoing. Ma Jiali, a veteran South-Asia expert at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), says India's recent economic performance combined with its growing importance in international affairs has led to a rethink in Beijing of India as "zhong he guoli," a Chinese term that translates roughly as a "comprehensive national power."...

Hindustan Times, 20 November 2006

'Re-adjustments to solve Indo-China border issue'

Beijing, November 19: Ahead of Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to India, prominent Chinese scholars have voiced optimism that Chinese and Indian leadership will take a historic decision to make "meaningful readjustments" on the vexed boundary issue and enhance their evolving strategic ties. "In my view, the task of the two sides is how to make meaningful readjustments which is acceptable to both sides," former Chinese Ambassador to India, Cheng Ruisheng said. "It is high time for the leaders of both sides to take a historical decision to find out a compromise formula. I am still optimistic about the final settlement of the boundary question," Cheng said. Describing Hu's November 20-23 state visit as a "climax" to the 'Year of India-China Friendship', Cheng said the visit by the Chinese President, first since 1996, was very important for both countries and both peoples and their evolving strategic partnership. Chen pointed out that late Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai had once said that China will take care of the sentiments for the

Indians towards Himalayas and they in turn should take care of the Chinese sentiments for Karakoram. "In general, this has been accepted by both sides"...

Hindustan Times, 20 November 2006

India seeks Australia's help for nuclear power

Melbourne, November 19:India on Sunday sought Australia's support for its plans to increase nuclear power generation and allow uranium exports to it."I would like Australia to support India in its nuclear case and supply uranium to India," Finance Minister P Chidambaram, who is here to attend the G-20 meeting said.Chidambaram said India wants to lift the proportion of nuclear energy it uses to 10 per cent, from a current three per cent of its energy supplies. Acknowledging that getting Australia's support would be hard, he said "Australia takes a very different view presumably because public opinion here is against nuclear power."The Finance Minister said he spoke with PM John Howard last week about the nuclear issue and that the Australian leader had heard him out "carefully and patiently"...

Hindustan Times, 20 November 2006

Hu urged to meet Dalai Lama in India

Dharamsala, November 18:Ahead of Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to India, Tibet's parliament-in-exile on Saturday urged him to meet Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama "preferably on Indian soil" to settle age-old disputes."There should be a meeting between the president of China and his holiness as soon as possible and preferably on Indian soil," said TT Karma Chopel, speaker of the 14th Tibetan parliament-in-exile...

The Hindu, 20 November 2006

Tibetan exiles protest Hu's India visit

New Delhi, Nov. 20 (AP): Buddhist monks in maroon and yellow robes and ordinary Tibetans, their faces painted in the colors of their flag, marched through downtown New Delhi Monday protesting the visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to India.More than 1,000 noisy demonstrators chanted anti-China slogans and called for an end to Chinese rule of Tibet. The protesters also called on the Indian government to take a tougher stance toward China over Tibet, which Chinese troops have occupied since 1951.Hu was set to arrive in India later Monday, the first trip by a Chinese President to India in a decade, for a three-day visit.' 'Hu Jintao: Wanted for crimes against humanity in China's illegal occupation of Tibet," read one poster. "Tibetan people want freedom" and "Wake up India," read others...

The Hindu, 20 November 2006

Pranab: nuclear issue may figure in talks with Hu

NEW DELHI : A day before Chinese President Hu Jintao arrives here on a four-day visit, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said on Sunday evening that India was willing to discuss the issue of civilian nuclear cooperation with China. In an exclusive interview to The Hindu , Mr. Mukherjee remarked: "We will discuss many other issues ' this [civilian nuclear cooperation] could be one of the issues." President Hu's trip to India was a "major visit" ' the first by a Chinese President in 10 years.Mr. Mukherjee hoped that the anti-terror mechanism with Pakistan would produce results. He said a meeting

with Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri was "likely." Asked whether civilian nuclear cooperation with China could extend beyond the Nuclear Suppliers Group since Beijing had supplied nuclear fuel for the Tarapur plant in 1995, he replied: "The possibilities are there. But it will depend on how we respond to each other's suggestions."...

The Hindu, 21 November 2006

India, China agree to 10-point strategy to enhance ties

New Delhi, Nov. 21 (PTI): India and China today agreed to a ten-pronged strategy to intensify cooperation and enhance the strategic ties between them. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who held a 100-minutes of talks with visiting Chinese President Hu Jintao here, said that the two sides decided the positive developments that have taken place in Sino-Indian ties "must be made irreversible". In his statement after parleys with Hu, who arrived here last night on a four-day visit, Singh said that the two sides would continue with regular summits and high-level exchanges to further strengthen relations between them. The Prime Minister said the two countries had agreed to promote civil nuclear cooperation. Appreciative of the progress made by the two Special Representatives on the border issue, Singh said both the leaders had asked them to expedite efforts on it based on the Political and the Guiding Principles signed in April last year...

The Hindu, 21 November 2006

Hu looks forward to chart course to strengthen ties with India

New Delhi, Nov. 21 (PTI): Describing India and China as friends, visiting Chinese President Hu Jintao said he was here to strengthen strategic cooperation and chart a course for future. After being accorded a ceremonial reception at Rashtrapati Bhawan here, Hu said the purpose of his visit was to increase mutual trust and expand cooperation with India. "India and China are friends. The purpose of my visit is to strengthen friendship, increase mutual trust, expand cooperation and chart a course for future," Hu said after receiving the guard of honour presented by the three wings of the armed forces at the imposing presidential palace...

The Hindu, 21 November 2006

Hu receives ceremonial welcome at Rashtrapati Bhawan

New Delhi, Nov. 21 (PTI): China's President Hu Jintao today began his four-day official visit to India here with a ceremonial welcome at the Rashtrapati Bhawan. President A P J Abdul Kalam welcomed Hu at the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhawan along with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and wife Gursharan Kaur. The first Chinese President to visit India in ten years, Hu, who arrived here last evening, took the salute at a guard of honour presented by the three wings of the armed forces at the imposing presidential palace. After some warm handshakes, Hu stood in attention on a decorated platform at the forecourt as a military band played the national anthems of the two countries. After the ceremony, Hu was introduced to cabinet Ministers by the Prime Minister and later visited Raj Ghat, the memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, to offer his respects. Among those present included External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee, Home Minister Shivraj Patil, Science and Technology Minister Kapil Sibal and Minister of State for Urban Development Ajay

Maken...

Hindustan Times, 21 November 2006

India aims for \$40 billion trade with China by 2010

India and China will work to raise their bilateral trade to \$40 billion by 2010, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on Tuesday. Singh was speaking at a joint news conference after talks with visiting Chinese President Hu Jintao. India and China agreed to a ten-pronged strategy to intensify cooperation and enhance the strategic ties between them. Chinese president said India and China must work together to create peace and development in Asia and the world. In 2006, the trade volume between India and China is expected to cross 20 billion dollars, a figure that the two countries had aimed to reach by 2008. In 2005, the figure was 17.5 billion dollars. From a figure of 260 million dollars of bilateral trade in 1991, the figure is set to cross 30 billion dollars before 2010...

The Hindu, 22 November 2006

China seeks no 'selfish gains' in South Asia: Hu

New Delhi, Nov. 22 (PTI): Backing the improving Indo-Pak relations, Chinese President Hu Jintao today said his country seeks no "selfish gains" in South Asia and was ready to play a "constructive role" for peace and development in the sub-continent. Delivering a lecture here, he said peaceful and prosperous South Asia was beneficial for entire Asia and the world at large. "China welcomes and supports improvement in relations between India and Pakistan," said Hu, a day ahead of his visit to Islamabad at the end of four-day trip here. "China does not seek any selfish gains in South Asia," he emphasised and added that Beijing stands ready to play a "constructive role for promotion of peace and development of the sub-continent". Seeking closer strategic relations with India, the Chinese President said he was here to enhance "mutual trust" and "chart a new course for future". He said the growth of Sino-India relations has raised the possibility of an early settlement of the boundary issue which is a "strategic goal" of both the countries...

The Hindu, 22 November 2006

Be pragmatic, this is era of globalisation: Hu

New Delhi, Nov. 22 (PTI): Chinese President Hu Jintao today had a word of advice for India's Communist leaders -- adopt a "more pragmatic" approach as this is the era of globalisation that provides immense scope for economic prosperity. A day after New Delhi and Beijing decided to boost their ties in commercial, political and strategic areas, Hu told a delegation of Left leaders which called on him here that both countries should enhance "mutual trust" to surge ahead in a globalised world. Globalisation provides scope for economic prosperity, and a "more pragmatic and positive approach" must be adopted by the Left to develop infrastructure and the economy, he told the leaders. The Left parties have often drawn flak from the Congress and other parties for their strident posture on issues like privatisation, and some sections of the government have even termed their actions as roadblocks in the path of development...

The Hindu, 22 November 2006

India, Brazil, S Africa sign pact on tax administration

Durban, Nov. 22 (PTI): India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) have signed an agreement

to enhance cooperation on tax and customs administration in order to boost trade and economic ties between the three countries. The agreement was signed in Pretoria between K M Chandrasekhar, Revenue Secretary of India, Pravin Gordhan, South Africa's Receiver of Revenue and Jorge Rachid, Federal Revenue Secretary of Brazil yesterday .The pact came at the end of a three-day inaugural meeting of the IBSA heads of Revenue Administrations.Gordhan said they had also agreed to establish an IBSA Revenue Administration Working Group to further expedite links between the organisations...

Hindustan Times, 22 November 2006

Chinese minister denies plan to dam Brahmaputra river

Beijing, November 22: China's top water official has dismissed claims that Beijing plans to divert the Brahmaputra river that flows from Tibet into India to quench China's needs, a proposal that added to tensions between the two parched Asian giants. The proposal to harness the Yarlung Zangbo River, which becomes the Brahmaputra River in India, has drawn public criticism in India, where Chinese President Hu Jintao has been visiting. But China's Minister for Water Resources, Wang Shucheng, said the proposal was "unnecessary, unfeasible and unscientific," and had no government backing, the China Daily reported on Wednesday. "There is no need for such dramatic and unscientific projects," Wang said...

Hindustan Times, 22 November 2006

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to visit Japan

Tokyo, November 21:Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will visit Japan from December 13 and hold talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Kyodo News reported Tuesday. Singh and Abe are to talk about a bilateral free trade agreement and are expected to discuss a strategic dialogue framework to strengthen ties on security, energy and economic issues, the Japanese foreign ministry spokesman said. Singh is also scheduled to meet with Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko...