

The Hindu, 1 October 2005

August blasts: Dhaka's charge against India

New Delhi: Bangladesh on Friday alleged that "criminal elements" in India had colluded with similar groups in Bangladesh and were responsible for the August 17 bomb blasts there. "Yes. It is the criminals from India who had crossed over and along with criminals in our country were responsible for the blasts," Director-General of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury told reporters while speaking at the conclusion of the talks with his Indian counterpart, R. S. Mooshahary of the Border Security Force (BSF). However, the accusation was denied by the BSF chief who said there was only one person of Indian origin among the 500 arrested in Bangladesh after the bombings in 63 districts. Mr. Mooshahary said the accused person, Ghiasuddin, had been living in Bangladesh for the past 17 years, married a woman there and settled in Bangladesh. The BSF chief also expressed grave concern over the continuing illegal migration from Bangladesh. A large number of Bangladeshi nationals have spread all over the country causing socio-economic problems, rise in crime and causing a change in the demographic pattern in certain areas.

The Hindu, 1 October 2005

India and Indonesia envision "strong partnership" (P. S. Suryanarayana)

Singapore: India and Indonesia have emphasised their "vision to transform" their relationship into "a strong partnership." Top officials who met in Yogyakarta on Wednesday under the Joint Consultative Forum, expressed "satisfaction" at the state of bilateral relations. The two sides also projected the proposed visit of Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to India as "a significant event" that could help translate the vision into a reality. India was represented by Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs Rajiv Sikri, Ambassador to Indonesia H. K. Singh and Joint Secretary Biren Nanda. The Indonesian team was led by Herijanto Soeprapto, Director-General (Asia Pacific and Africa), and Ambassador to India, Donnilo Anwar. The discussions ranged from the ongoing cooperation in defence and space and the growing bilateral trade and economic ties to the United Nations reforms and the anti-terror campaign, official sources said.

The Hindu, 1 October 2005

Arms embargo on Nepal should continue: Indian team

Kathmandu: India should continue arms embargo on Nepal to pressure King Gyanendra to restore multiparty democracy in the Himalayan Kingdom, according to visiting Indian political leaders. All the political parties represented in the delegation felt that arms supply should not continue, said CPI(M)'s Sitaram Yechuri at a press conference here on Friday. "We have already told the Government of India about that," he said at the conclusion of the five-party delegation's three-day visit to Nepal. He also denied allegations by the Nepalese authorities that they were interfering in the internal affairs of the kingdom. "We are here not to interfere in internal affairs of Nepal, but to extend solidarity and moral support to the Nepalese people's movement for restoration of democracy." If extending moral support to democracy is interference in internal affairs, then why VHP and Shiva Sena chiefs' remarks supporting the February 1 Royal takeover were not an interference, he asked.

The Hindu, 2 October, 2005

Russia open to more oil projects: Aiyar

Sakhalin (Russia): The Sakhalin-I field in far-east Russia is expected to produce about 12.5 million tonnes of oil and 10 billion cubic metres of gas annually at its peak production level. Of this, ONGC

Videsh Ltd's (OVL's) share will be 20 per cent in proportion to its equity. The total production of Sakhalin-I in its 40-year life cycle is estimated at 307 million tonnes of oil and 485 billion cubic metres of gas. The Sakhalin-I project includes the Chayvo, Odoptu and Arkutun-Dagi fields. Over its 40-year life, plans call for producing 2.3 billion barrels of oil and 17 trillion cubic feet of gas. The total investment in full development of the fields has been estimated at more than \$12 billion. Officials said ExxonMobil had found an extra 560 million barrels of oil in the Sakhalin. The discovery of new reserves, representing around a quarter of the already confirmed reserves of 307 million tonnes (2.3 billion barrels), would be a boost for the project.

The Hindu, 2 October, 2005

Hasina flays BDR

New Delhi: Bangladesh's top Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina strongly criticised the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) on Saturday for alleging the involvement of Indian groups in the August 17 bomb blasts. She said such blame could not be apportioned without investigation. Ms. Hasina, who is on a five-day visit, was answering reporters when asked about the allegations by Director-General of BDR Jahangir Alam Chowdhury. "With neighbouring countries, we always want good relationships," she said. "But this kind of statement can damage our relationship." Ms. Hasina had a 90-minute meeting with UPA chairperson and Congress president Sonia Gandhi during which she said that as chiefs of the two leading parties of the sub-continent that played dominant roles in their gaining independence, there was need to strengthen party-to-party linkages.

The Hindu, 3 October, 2005

Hasina calls for probe into Bangladesh blasts

Kolkata: The Bangladesh Government should conduct impartial inquiries into the August 17 blasts, dig up evidence and get its facts right before blaming anyone, the former Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, said here on Sunday. Her remarks come close on the heels of the recent allegation made by the visiting Director-General of Bangladesh Rifles that "criminal elements" in India had colluded with similar groups in Bangladesh and were responsible for the blasts, a charge that was described as "baseless and scurrilous" by the Ministry of External Affairs. Expressing concern over the rise of fundamentalist forces in her country, Ms. Hasina, leader of Bangladesh's main Opposition party, the Awami League, said that if voted to power in the next elections, she would take a tough stand against such forces. On the relations between India and Bangladesh, she said it was of no use to "keep alive" problems that existed. "These must be solved by the respective Governments. In my time, [as Prime Minister of Bangladesh] I was able to solve some of the outstanding problems [with India]," she said.

The Hindu, 4 October, 2005

Anti-Iran vote an "abject lesson" for India, says Lantos

New Delhi: Tom Lantos, the U.S. legislator who led the charge against India's relations with Iran at Congressional hearings on the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal last month, has described the Manmohan Singh Government's decision finally to side with Washington at the IAEA on September 24 as "an abject lesson" for New Delhi. According to a report by IANS news agency, Mr. Lantos told a House International Relations Committee hearing on U.N. reform on October 1 that India had been forced to make a choice. "There was a tremendous hop-up in the Indian media, and the government reacted strongly [to the criticisms made during the 8 September hearings of India's friendship with Iran]. But last Saturday, India voted with us in Vienna because it decided that it is more important to maintain its

relationship with us than accommodate the Ayatollahs in Tehran.

The Hindu, 4 October, 2005

India for liberalisation of visa regime (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

Islamabad: At Tuesday's Joint Commission meeting here, India is likely to present to Pakistan three proposals, including liberalisation of the visa regime and improvement of the consular access system. The proposals seek to formalise the unilateral decisions by India on liberalisation of the visa regime and bring Pakistan on board. The proposals include an increase in the number of nationals visiting the other country for pilgrimage and also the number of shrines. The proposals will be forwarded in the form of amendments to update the 1974 Visa Agreement, the 1982 Protocol on Consular Access and the 1974 Bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines, officials said here on Monday. Multiple-entry visa :On the visa issue, the Indian proposal will involve an agreement to grant visa for six months instead of the present 90-day cap, with maximum three entries. It will also propose the inclusion of new categories for pilgrims, businesspersons and students.

The Indian Express, 4 October, 2005

Triangular ties are tricky (C. Raja Mohan)

With the triangular relationship among India, the United States, and Pakistan delicately poised, it is in the interest of all the three parties not to drop the ball now. The triangular interaction in New York last month among the leaders of the three countries underlined the reality that mis-steps in one set of relations could undermine the others. Having achieved the near impossible - a simultaneous improvement of relations with both India and Pakistan over the last five years - the Bush administration ought to be extra-careful that what it does with Pakistan does not harm either Indo-US relations or the Indo-Pak peace process. While cautioning the Bush administration against muddying the peace process with Pakistan and urging Islamabad not to overplay its hand on Kashmir, India should recognise its own responsibility to move the peace process forward. When External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh meets Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf today, he has the challenging task of putting the New York debacle behind and coming up with a better understanding on how to make simultaneous progress on both cross-border terrorism and Kashmir.

The Hindu, 5 October 2005

Committed to gas pipeline project" (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

Islamabad: Seeking to allay apprehensions on the proposed India-Pakistan-Iran multi-billion dollar gas pipeline project, India and Pakistan have reiterated their commitment to it and agreed that it would contribute significantly to the prosperity and development of the two countries. A joint statement issued at the end of the first leg of the visit of External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh on Tuesday made a one-paragraph reference to the project. While there have been no new developments related to the pipeline, both sides deemed it necessary to take note of it in the light of the controversy triggered by the Indian decision to vote on the EU-sponsored resolution on the Iranian nuclear programme at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) meeting in Vienna. The project also figured at the bilateral discussions between Mr. Singh and his Pakistani counterpart, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, as well as at Mr. Singh's meeting with Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz. In the course of the discussions India pointed out to the Pakistani leadership that it had recently appointed an expert to look into the 'economic viability' of the pipeline and awaited the report for a decision.

The Hindu, 5 October 2005

India-Australia CECA planned

New Delhi: India is exploring the possibility of having a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with Australia which is to include a free trade agreement (FTA) clause. Bringing this matter up during discussions with the Premier of Western Australia, Geoff Gallop, here on Tuesday, the Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, Kamal Nath, said such an agreement could cover trade in goods and services as well as investment. Mr. Nath indicated that he would discuss the matter with the Australian Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Trade, Mark Vaile, on the sidelines of a WTO meeting scheduled for next week in Geneva, an official release said. During the interaction, Mr. Gallop noted that Western Australia was keen to cooperate with India in the field of oil and natural gas. Mr. Kamal Nath informed Mr. Gallop that ONGC Videsh Ltd., a subsidiary of ONGC, had acquired participatory interest in the hydrocarbon sector in Western Australia and also conveyed India's interest in cooperation in the field as Australia had sizable gas resources.

The Hindu, 6 October 2005

All set for Scorpene submarine deal (Sandeep Dikshit)

New Delhi: India will sign a \$1.8-billion submarine deal with France on Thursday amid a controversy that a company involved in the deal had a 'slush funds account'. The French Ambassador Dominique Girard dismissed the allegation as "unfair." A delegation of the chief executive officers of the companies involved in the contract has arrived here for the signing ceremony with the Defence Ministry. The six submarines to be built at the Mazgaon Docks in Mumbai will augment the Navy's fleet, which will start retiring by the time the first Scorpene submarine is inducted. The deal will also activate the submarine-building facility at Mazgaon that has been largely lying idle for a decade. The Government decided the deal on a single tender basis. Two other contenders were not looked upon favourably - the German submarine-maker HDW was not reconsidered while desultory discussions were held for the Russian Amur class conventional submarines. India has 16 submarines, of which two are on the verge of retirement. Phased decommissioning of the other 14 will begin from 2010. The delay in deciding on submarines led to the Navy signing an agreement with the U.S. for rescue systems.

The Hindu, 7 October, 2005

India to build six French submarines under pact

New Delhi: India on Thursday signed a deal to construct six French submarines in the country at a cost of over Rs. 15,000 crores. The official go-ahead for this mega project had come through a joint statement made by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the French President Jacques Chirac in Paris on September 12. The contract will just about fill the breach in submarine force levels that are poised to decline. The deal has a 30 per cent offset clause, meaning that one-third of the cost of the deal would be met through import substitution. The first French Scorpene submarine will be ready for service within seven years of signing the contract. The others will follow at an interval of one year. "The force levels will be down [by the time the first Scorpene is inducted] but we will improvise, if need be, by better deployments, upgrades or life extensions," said the Chief of Naval Staff Arun Prakash who along with a host of naval officers witnessed the signing of three contracts in the war room at South Block.

The Hindu, 7 October, 2005

Kashmir, Taiwan and North Korea are potential hotbeds: John Reid

New Delhi: British Defence Secretary John Reid believes that Kashmir, Taiwan and North Korea are

“three potential crises” in Asia that could provoke a regional conflict with the risk of nuclear escalation. On Jammu and Kashmir, Dr. Reid stated that the British Government totally condemned the use of terrorism. “The way to resolve this issue is through political process and patient bilateral discussion and negotiation, not through terrorism. I would just like to say that we are hugely encouraged by the current rapprochement between New Delhi and Islamabad over the issue.” Serious questions :In an address at the India Habitat Centre here on Wednesday, Dr. Reid felt that the emergence of China as an economic superpower posed serious questions. “I disagree strongly with those who want to ‘contain’ China in the way that the old Soviet Union was ‘contained’. Such a response would be ineffectual and counter-productive. It is far better to engage so that China plays its full and responsible part in the international community.

The Hindu, 13 October 2005

India obsessed with permanent seat in U.N. Security Council: N. Ram (Hasan Suroor)

London: The Manmohan Singh Government's foreign policy is in danger of becoming hostage to its "obsession" with securing a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council and its pursuit of ever closer "strategic partnership" with America, N. Ram, Editor-in-Chief of The Hindu , has said. Speaking at the London School of Economics (LSE), Mr. Ram singled out India's decision to vote against Iran at last month's crucial meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as an example of how these two issues threatened to undermine the independence of Indian foreign policy. He described India's support to the U.S.-led "provocative" resolution on Iran as one of the biggest foreign policy "blunders" of the government and warned that it could not afford to commit more such mistakes. "One fatal mistake such as the vote against Iran, and who knows what will happen," he said in reply to a question from the audience about the future of the Congress-led coalition Government, emphasising that it was a minority government supported by 15 political parties and crucially dependent on the outside support of the Left.

The Asian Age, 13 October 2005

India seeks 4 more reactors (By Seema Mustafa)

New Delhi, Oct. 12: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will visit Russia in the first week of December, with defence and nuclear cooperation high on the agenda. Both countries are looking at the supply of four additional nuclear reactors for the Koodankulam atomic power plant, with Moscow supportive of the India-US civilian nuclear energy pact as a way towards clearance by the Nuclear Suppliers Group for the sale of nuclear reactors to India. The Russians had made it clear to the Indian government that they were powerless to proceed on this front, and that it was essential for New Delhi to tackle the United States and ensure NSG approval for removing restrictions that had been imposed on India after the Pokhran nuclear tests, highly-placed sources here said. New Delhi has expressed interest in four nuclear reactors for the Koodankulam power plant, in addition to the two reactors set up by the Russians. It is now proposed that two of the nuclear reactors (of 1,000 MW each) will be constructed by Russia, and the other two by India, which has acquired the technology to do so, if and when the NSG lifts its objections. It is apparent that both Russia and France in this group will strongly back India when the matter comes up for discussion.

The Hindustan Times, 15 October 2005

Debt relief not enough, help Africa to develop: India

Asking the international community to move from "rhetoric to action" on the issue of helping Africa, India has said that the rich countries should provide assistance to the continent on a sustained basis to

put it on the path of development rather than responding to crisis. While welcoming the decision of the industrialized nations to reduce or write off debt of heavily indebted African nations, Indian delegate Suresh Kurup said the emphasis should be on investment in Africa's human resources and development of private sector apart from increase in aid levels and debt relief. Intervening in the debate on "New Partnership for Africa Development" (NEPAD) in the UN General Assembly yesterday, the MP said Africa essentially needed additional financial assistance over an extended period of time to meet its human needs and development goals and the international community needs to remain engaged during the transition period from relief to development. Stressing that Africa holds the key to its own development, Kurup said the objective of development would be best served by an African-led and African-developed agenda.

The Hindustan Times, 15 October 2005

SAARC Summit expected to go ahead as scheduled

Notwithstanding the killer earthquake in Pakistan, the SAARC Summit in Dhaka in November is expected to go ahead as scheduled as of now. Asked about the status of preparatory meetings ahead of the Summit, External Affairs Ministry spokesman said "I have no information of any cancellations, changes or postponements". Besides, there is still about a month to go for the meeting of leaders from the seven-member regional grouping. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has confirmed his participation in the Summit which had been twice postponed this year -- the first time in the wake of the tsunami tragedy affecting three SAARC countries and the second time due to developments in Bangladesh and Nepal. Under the SAARC Charter, it is mandatory for the participation of the top leadership of all member nations for the summit to take place.

The Hindu, 16 October, 2005

India welcome to join war games with Shanghai group, says Russia

(Vladimir Radyuhin)

Moscow: Russian Defence Minister has expressed the hope that India will take part in future joint war games with the Shanghai security group, but downplayed the possibility of trilateral military manoeuvres with India and China. "India, which has recently joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as an observer, may be interested in establishing closer security and defence ties with this group, which was set up to deal primarily with security issues," he said. "So I would certainly not rule out that at some point in the future India will take part in multilateral military exercises staged by SCO." These should not necessarily be trilateral war games and were likely to involve also Central Asian members of the SCO. The Shanghai group comprises Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Last summer, India, Pakistan and Iran joined the group as observers. Mongolia received the observer status last year. Mr. Ivanov said an invitation to India might be sent when the format and the time frame for the multilateral war games were defined. Anti-terrorist training : Speaking to The Hindu before his departure for India on Saturday to observe the second phase of Indo-Russian exercises of airborne and naval forces in Rajasthan, Mr. Ivanov said the joint manoeuvres for anti-terrorist training represented a "qualitative jump" in military-to-military cooperation between the two countries. "Russia and India both suffer from terrorism and have rich experience to share in dealing with the threat. " New defence deals will be discussed during Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee's visit here next month for a meeting of the Indo-Russian Intergovernmental Commission for Military-Technical Cooperation.

The Hindu, 17 October 2005

Natwar meets Iranian envoy

New Delhi: External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh met the Iranian Ambassador Siyavash Zargar Yaghoubi on Saturday and discussed bilateral relations, regional issues and international security issues with him. According to the Ministry spokesman, Mr. Singh met the Ambassador at the latter's request and the meeting lasted about an hour. IAEA vote :It is learnt that Mr. Singh and Mr. Yaghoubi talked about the situation after the vote at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) against Iran. Future cooperation between the two nations on the nuclear issue also figured in the discussions. According to official sources, New Delhi is keen on the European Union and Iran holding discussions again to reduce the possibility of a confrontation between the two sides. India's stand after its September 24 vote against Teheran has been that its position helped in keeping the Iranian nuclear issue within the IAEA framework.

The Hindu, 17 October 2005

India, Russia conduct first joint exercise (Mohammed Iqbal)

Bikaner: The defence forces of India and Russia on Sunday held their first-ever joint airborne military exercise at the Mahajan Field Firing Range, nearly 100 km from here. The joint exercise was a spectacular show of coordination between the 140 military personnel from the both countries and introduced the concept of "interoperability" against a counter-terrorism backdrop. The top military brass of India and Russia and Russian Defence Minister Sergei Borisovich Ivanov watched the three-hour-long event. The exercise, codenamed 'Indra', involved raid and destruction of a mock terrorist stronghold with the simultaneous securing of an advance landing ground. Paratroopers of both countries, who have been training together in Agra for the last few days, launched the hit-and-run operations in a blitzkrieg style. The objective of the exercise was to strengthen cooperation between the countries to counter terrorism. The western sector was selected for the show in view of its easy accessibility and availability of huge tracts of open desert land. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Borisovich Ivanov said the exercise would herald a new era of defence cooperation with India as a strategic partner and would benefit both the countries through the exchange of information, equipment and experience. This, he said, would help strengthen the fight against international terrorism.

The Hindu, 17 October 2005

Streamline immigration policies, Chidambaram tells G-20 meet (P.S. Suryanarayana)

Singapore: Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Sunday emphasised the "need for a coordinated approach to immigration policies in labour-importing countries as well as labour-exporting countries." Addressing the Group of Twenty (G-20) meeting of Finance Ministers and central bank governors at a resort-city near Beijing, Mr. Chidambaram said the "imperatives of globalisation require necessary policy responses" regarding the migration of workers and professionals from the developing countries to the developed bloc. "Well-managed migration could actually provide a positive contribution to employment and global economic growth, if we manage to successfully promote the integration of the migrants in host-societies." Countries across the world "would do well to shift the emphasis from immigration control to better immigration management," he told the G-20 before the Ministers concluded the two-day meeting.

The Hindu, 18 October 2005

India, Myanmar pact on joint interrogation

New Delhi: In a boost to the mutual cooperation in tackling criminal and insurgency-related activities, India and Myanmar have agreed to hold joint interrogation of persons arrested for drugs, arms

smuggling and for involvement in militancy. They also agreed to further strengthen cooperation in curbing trafficking in drugs and psychotropic substances. At the conclusion of the 11th national-level meeting between the Home Secretaries of India and Myanmar in Yangon on Monday, the two sides agreed to step up action against arms smugglers. Myanmar reiterated that it would not allow negative elements to use its territory for carrying out hostile activities against India. The talks were held in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and trust and it was agreed that maintenance of peace in the border area was pre-requisite for development of both the countries.

The Hindu, 18 October 2005

Indian teams in Dhaka to assess security (Haroon Habib)

Dhaka: Security teams from India arrived here on Monday to assess the security arrangements for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh ahead of his visit to the Bangladeshi capital to attend the 13th SAARC summit in the second week of November. The security aspects assume importance in the wake of the August 17 serial bombings across the country followed by blasts in three district towns in the first week of October, informed sources said. The Bangladesh Foreign Affairs Advisor and SAARC chief coordinator, Reaz Rahman, said the country was speeding up pre-summit works after Pakistan reconfirmed its participation in the summit despite the October 8 earthquake. However, Pakistan has postponed the October 21-22 SAARC Commerce Ministers' meeting in the wake of the earthquake. Replying to a question, Mr. Rahman said security was a big factor that called for reorganising some aspects such as the retreat for spouses of SAARC leaders. Six sub-committees had been formed to ensure maximum security during the summit. Around 300 members of the official SAARC delegations are expected to arrive in Dhaka for the summit. Besides, around 300 foreign media personnel are likely to cover the event.

The Hindu, 19 October, 2005

Sailing in tandem: India-Russia exercises (G. Narasimha Rao)

On Board Ins Mumbai: The Indian and Russian navies are working together to develop their ability to counter maritime threats, notably those linked to terrorism. The Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Eastern Naval Command (ENC), Vice-Admiral Sureesh Mehta, told reporters on board this, the Western Naval Command's flagship, ahead of the joint India-Russia naval exercises, christened INDRA 05, that the main focus of the exercise was on anti-terrorist operations. The exercise, which started on Monday, will end on Wednesday. He said: "Compared to the last exercise held in 2003, the scope has been enlarged and the stress is more on [the] tactical part rather than [on] using more weapons... Procedure is more important. More complicated exercises have been included."

The Hindu, 20 October, 2005

Deal with India won't weaken non-proliferation: Burns (Amit Baruah)

NEW DELHI: India's September 24 vote at the IAEA governing board meeting is a "dramatic example" of where it stands in preventing a "theocratic" Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, U.S. Under-Secretary of State Nicholas Burns said on Tuesday. India's vote in Vienna found Iran in non-compliance with International Atomic Energy Agency statute, he said addressing the Asia Society in New York. (However, in its September 24 explanation, New Delhi said Iran had not violated Article XII-C of the IAEA statute and neither did the "current situation" pose a threat to international peace and security.) Mr. Burns disagreed that the July 18 civilian nuclear deal between New Delhi and Washington weakened global non-proliferation efforts.

The Indian Express, 20 October, 2005

Hoping against hope (Ejaz Haider)

The devastating earthquake that rocked parts of Pakistan-administered Kashmir and five districts of the North West Frontier Province offers a good opportunity to Pakistan and India to take the normalisation process to a higher level. However, two interlocked factors make the realisation of this hope difficult. One is related to Pakistan's internal politics. The government, which already lacks political legitimacy, has come under the gun for not responding to the crisis quickly enough. Since the coup in October 1999, General Pervez Musharraf is perhaps at his weakest today. The second factor pertains to how Pakistan and India look at each other despite normalisation. Pakistan still perceives India as the primary security threat; India returns the favour. These responses have been institutionalised. Getting the two capitals to cooperate as closely as the tragedy in the wake of the quake calls for, is to put a very high premium on hope.

The Indian Express, 20 October, 2005

Natwar meets Nepal counterpart

New Delhi, October 19: On his way to Bhutan, External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh had an "informal", "unscheduled" meeting with his Nepalese counterpart Rameshnath Pande during a transit stop at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu. According to official sources, the meeting that took place two days ago at the VIP lounge happened at the behest of the Nepalese side. It comes at a time when the seven-party alliance there has decided to boycott parliamentary elections, which King Gyanendra plans to hold by April 2007. India has avoided any comment on the elections but New Delhi took serious note of the King's new ordinance imposing additional curbs on the media, saying that it would be counter-productive.

The Indian Express, 21 October 2005

Next steps in India's US nuclear deal (Pranab Dhal Samanta)

New Delhi, October 20: In discussing the fineprint of the July 18 Indo-US nuclear deal, both sides will have to grapple with a range of questions behind the complex processes involved to achieve simultaneous movement on two key aspects: Bush Administration bringing a legislation to the US Congress and India working on separating its civilian and nuclear reactors. Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns, who reaches here this evening, have their task cut out over the next couple of days as they initiate talks on implementing the commitments made on July 18. Burns' speech at the Asia Society and reports that barring Sweden and Japan, there was not much opposition to the US proposal for special status to India at the Nuclear Suppliers Group meeting in Vienna lends a positive backdrop to the talks here. But moving forward on the two key aspects of the nuclear deal is a complex affair. To begin with, the Bush Administration needs to approach the US Congress to amend its laws as stated in the 1954 Atomic Energy Act (AEA) which were inserted as an amendment through the 1978 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act.

The Hindu, 22 October 2005

India, Mexico sign five agreements

New Delhi: The India-Mexico Joint Commission, which met on Friday after nine years, produced five agreements in foreign service training, culture, scientific cooperation, education and diplomatic and official visa exemptions. Talking to this correspondent after the meeting here, Mexican Deputy Foreign Minister Lourdes Aranda Bezaury, who headed an 18-member delegation, said she also had an exchange of views with Minister of State for External Affairs Rao Inderjit Singh.

The Indian Express, 22 October, 2005

Govt freezes French contact as Paris, Delhi fight visa war (Shishir Gupta)

New Delhi, October 21: The Indo-French relationship, recently sweetened by the Prime Minister's visit, the multi-billion-dollar Scorpene submarine deal and the Airbus purchase, has just turned sour. A peculiar visa row has escalated to such an extent that the Ministry of External Affairs, in an unprecedented move, has asked all government departments to put on hold any official visit to France. In an October 19 letter, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran has asked all Secretaries of government departments to not even plan for transit stops in France. Training programmes are on hold, officials have been asked not to attend social functions hosted by the French Embassy.

The Hindu, 24 October 2005

India, Romania want to improve tie-ups in oil and gas sector

New Delhi : India and Romania on Sunday decided to further enhance cooperation in the oil and gas sector. At a meeting here between the two country delegations, led by Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Mani Shankar Aiyar and Romanian Minister for Economy and Commerce Ioan C. Seres, it was agreed to concretise the proposals and projects identified for cooperation as per the understanding reached during Mr Aiyar's visit to Romania in July. Mr. Aiyar said there were many opportunities in exploration and production (E&P), refining, pipeline and research and development. Indian companies could look for possible E&P ventures in the Black Sea region while those from Romanian could participate in upstream activities in India, in general, and in the Bay of Bengal, in particular.

The Hindu, 24 October 2005

India, Malaysia review progress on economic pact (P. S. Suryanarayana)

SINGAPORE: India and Malaysia have opened a "new level of interaction" by initiating "Foreign Office consultations." The first meeting was held at Putra Jaya in Malaysia on Thursday. The impetus to a broad-based relationship was the main focus of these talks, official sources said. Ahmad Fuzi, Secretary General, Malaysian Foreign Ministry, and Rajiv Sikri, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, led the delegations. The other Indian delegates included the High Commissioner to Malaysia, R. L. Narayan, Joint Secretary Biren Nanda, and Deputy High Commissioner Sanjay Panda. The consultations acquired importance in the absence of a security dialogue. Considered, too, were the feasibility of a comprehensive economic cooperation agreement (CECA) and the scope of the first East Asia Summit (EAS) to be hosted by Malaysia in December. The EAS, mooted by the 10-member Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN), will be attended by six of its dialogue-partners as well. These include India, China and Japan.

The Hindu, 24 October 2005

New Zealand, India in aviation deal (P. S. Suryanarayana)

SINGAPORE: India and New Zealand have agreed to promote "seamless air travel" between the two countries by entering into a "code-sharing arrangement" for flights that now link them. Indicating this, Civil Aviation Secretary Ajay Prasad said over the telephone on Sunday that there were "no immediate plans for direct flights" between India and New Zealand. Mr. Prasad was in transit in Singapore on his way back home from New Zealand, where he held talks with civil aviation authorities. He said the "code-sharing" might help "build up the market" for direct flights. As of now, five cities on each side were identified for possible direct flights.

The Indian Express, 24 October, 2005

India to push Russia on NSG (Dadan Upadhyay)

Moscow, October 24: External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh, who is arriving here on October 25, will ask Russia to persuade the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to open the door to civil nuclear cooperation with India. According to diplomatic sources here, Singh will urge Moscow "to do its bit" to help New Delhi, keeping in mind the "breakthrough" that has been achieved, in principle, between India and the US on the issue. Singh will be here for four days to co-chair the 11th session of Indo-Russian Inter-Government Commission (IRIGC) for trade, economic, scientific-technological and cultural cooperation. "All this time, the Russians have been telling India that it must talk to the US. Now India has talked to them and it has achieved the breakthrough. So India's expectation would be that Russia along with France capitalise on this and accelerate, within the NSG, the process of thinking and decision-making," the sources stressed.

The Hindu, 25 October 2005

India wants to avoid divisive vote (Amit Baruah)

New Delhi: India wants to avoid a "divisive" vote at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) governing board when it meets on November 24, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran said on Monday. Asked if the Government believed that Iran was building a nuclear weapon, he replied that Iran had declared at the highest level that it was not seeking nuclear weapons. There were, however, some activities that Iran needed to explain. India, he said, had also welcomed Iran's cooperation with the IAEA. Referring to pending issues related to Iran before the IAEA, Mr. Saran said there had been cooperation between Teheran and the Vienna-based agency, but the issue of Iranian "links" with the Pakistan-based A.Q. Khan proliferation network remained.

The Hindu, 25 October 2005

Mauritius can benefit from Indian market: Ramgoolam

New Delhi : The Prime Minister of Mauritius, Navinchandra Ramgoolam, on Monday described the framework of the 'Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement' (CECPA) between India and Mauritius as a "bold step forward" which will lead to free movement of capital, goods, services and people. Addressing the captains of Indian industry at a meeting organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India here, Dr. Ramgoolam said CECPA would be a model for a new type of regional integration and Mauritius could become a stepping stone for Indian industry to the African continent. While Mauritius' membership in the Southern African Development Community and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa opened a potential market of around 500 million, Mauritius business could benefit from India's huge market of sub-continental dimensions.

The Hindu, 26 October 2005

Natwar Singh in Moscow (Vladimir Radyuhin)

Moscow: External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh has expressed confidence that his four-day visit to Russia will strengthen strategic partnership between India and Russia. Mr. Singh arrived here on Tuesday for the 11th session of the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific-Technical and Cultural Cooperation. He is leading a 28-member delegation, which includes high-ranking officials from the Ministries of External Affairs, Information Technology, Petroleum, Steel and Coal and other agencies and banks. "I am looking forward to my meetings with

President [Vladimir] Putin and Foreign Minister [Sergei] Lavrov and to discussing bilateral and multilateral issues of mutual interest,"he said in a statement on arrival. Mr. Singh will finalise the agenda for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Russia later this year.

The Hindustan Times, 26 October 2005

India, Bangladesh home secy to meet on Oct 27

Home secretary-level talks between India and Bangladesh will be held here on October 27 and 28 to resolve differences between the two countries on various contentious issues including border fencing, illegal migration and terrorist camps on Bangladesh territory, official sources said on Tuesday. The two countries will also have further discussions on the drafts of the extradition treaty and the treaty on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters. The drafts of two treaties have already been given to Bangladesh by India at the last home secretary-level talks held in Dhaka on September 13-17.

The Hindu, 27 October 2005

India to play active role in Shanghai group (Vladimir Radyuhin)

Moscow: External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh declared India's intention to play an active role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which it joined as observer in July. "India supports the objectives of the SCO, which seeks to ensure stability in the SCO region, combat terrorism and extremist viewpoints,"the Minister said in his address at an SCO meeting at the level of heads of government in Moscow on Wednesday. "India is keen on playing a constructive and active role in the SCO."The four-year-old Shanghai group comprises six full members - Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and four observer states - India, Iran, Pakistan and Mongolia. Mongolia and Pakistan were represented at the meeting by Prime Ministers, and Iran by a Vice-President.

The Hindu, 27 October 2005

India, Russia to boost energy, IT cooperation (Vladimir Radyuhin)

Moscow: India and Russia have agreed to expand their cooperation in energy, diamonds and information technologies as part of efforts to increase bilateral trade to between \$7 and 10 billion in the next few years. External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh said new deals in the oil and gas sector with Russia were in the pipeline. "We expect concrete results in the near future," he said here on Wednesday. Addressing the 11th session of the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission (IRIGC) on Trade, Economic, Scientific-Technical and Cultural Cooperation in Moscow, Mr. Singh said India was determined to go beyond its \$3-billion investment in the Sakhalin-1 oil and gas project. "India is technically equipped and financially capable and willing to jointly work with Russia to make our energy cooperation an important and mutually beneficial dimension of our strategic partnership,"he said.

The Hindu, 28 October 2005

Russia offers help to lift nuclear curbs on India (Vladimir Radyuhin)

Moscow : President Vladimir Putin pledged Russia's support for India to get international restrictions on civilian nuclear technology transfers lifted. The Russian leader made the promise while receiving External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh at his residence in Novo-Ogoryovo near Moscow on Thursday. "Russia is helping India indeed in the Nuclear Suppliers Group,"Mr. Singh said after the hour-long meeting. He specifically mentioned a recent NSG meeting in Vienna where the India case was discussed. "Russia, as well as the United States helped us at the Vienna meeting."Russia had

promised to set up four more nuclear reactors at Koodankulam in addition to two reactors it is currently erecting there once the NSG guidelines for India are modified to allow n-technology supplies. Mr. Singh told newsmen that nuclear energy had been identified as a priority area of Indo-Russian cooperation along with defence and space.

The Hindu, 28 October 2005

India clears the air with Iran (Vladimir Radyuhin)

Moscow: External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh has taken advantage of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting here to clear the air in India-Iran relations. During a half-hour meeting on Wednesday with Iran's First Deputy President Parviz Davoodi, Mr. Singh tried to put India-Iran relations back on track. He reiterated India's position that Iran's nuclear programme should be dealt with within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Dr. Davoodi restated Iran's position that all it was seeking was non-discriminatory treatment under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Both positions were reiterated in the background of the shared concern that India-Iran relations should continue to be steady and productive, keeping in mind long-term interests.

The Statesman, 28 October 2005

Indo-Bangla talks focus on fencing

New Delhi, Oct. 27. - India today again raised the issue of border fencing, illegal migration and terrorist camps on Bangladesh territory during the two-day Indo-Bangla secretary-level talks that began here today. Besides the terrorist camps running in the Chittagong region of Bangladesh, the Indian government also took up the issue of terrorism and tacit support to north-east insurgents from across the border. The Union home secretary, Mr VK Duggal, discussed the extradition treaty and the treaty on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters with the Bangladesh home secretary, Mr Safar Raj Hossain, who is leading the Bangladesh delegation. The drafts of the two treaties were given to Bangladesh by India at the last home secretary-level talks held in Dhaka on 13-17 September last year. He gave a list of 307 criminals, including the names of leaders of some terrorist group, who have taken shelter in Bangladesh, and another list of 172 insurgent camps.

The Asian Age, 28 October 2005

India shifts on Iran (By Seema Mustafa and Ramesh Ramachandran)

New Delhi, Oct. 27: India will now work with China and Russia, as well as the European Union, to reach a "mutually acceptable solution" on Iran before the November meeting of the IAEA board of governors in Vienna. Under domestic flak for voting in favour of the EU 3 resolution at the last meeting, the government has stated that it would like to avoid any reference of Iran to the UN Security Council, and would try to ensure that the issue is settled "amicably" within the IAEA itself. Judging from reports in the Russian and Iranian press, external affairs minister Natwar Singh has had a highly successful visit to Moscow where he attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting. He held a half-hour bilateral meeting with Iranian vice-president Perviz Davoodi after which the MEA spokesperson here announced that India would work actively with Russia, China and the European Union to reach a mutually acceptable solution for Iran when the IAEA board of governors meets again in Vienna.

The Hindu, 29 October 2005

Russia, U.S. to revise norms for nuclear tech transfers to India (Vladimir Radyuhin)

Moscow: Russia is working with the United States to revise the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) guidelines to allow nuclear technology transfers to India, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Friday. Mr. Lavrov told External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh here that Russia was "mindful of

India's impeccable record on non-proliferation,"the Indian Embassy said in a press release. "In this connection it was felt that exception could be made for India in terms of norms observed by the Nuclear Suppliers Group. The Russian side indicated that cooperation between India and Russia in the field of civilian nuclear energy could be expanded."The External Affairs Minister met the Russian Foreign Minister on the last day of his four-day visit to Russia, during which he co-chaired the 11th session of the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission (IRIGC) for Trade, Economic, Scientific-Technical and Cultural Cooperation, and attended a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation at the level of heads of government.

The Asian Age, 29 October, 2005

Nuclear deal: Canada puts India on CIRUS watch (By Ramesh Ramachandran)

New Delhi, Oct. 28: Despite India's assertion that designating a nuclear reactor as a civil or military facility will be her sovereign choice, Canada has said it will watch closely under which category India places the CIRUS reactor. The Canadian statement comes as the United States applies pressure on New Delhi to separate its nuclear facilities before any agreement on the nuclear deal with India is presented to Capitol Hill. The Canadian government told this newspaper, "The separation of the civilian and military fuel cycles, and the scope and nature of safeguards to be applied on the civilian part, is a very important issue, and that as part of this process the disposition of the CIRUS reactor will be a matter of particular interest to Canada."Canada supplied the CIRUS reactor at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in Trombay. Significantly, the size of the nuclear force is determined primarily by the supply of reprocessed plutonium from the unsafeguarded CIRUS and Dhruva heavy water research reactors at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre.

The Hindu, 30 October, 2005

Mauritius invites Indian investment

Chennai: "There is tremendous potential for Indian investors in Mauritius, especially in tourism, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, BPOs, information technology and the energy sector and investors could make the best use of them to the benefit of both the countries,"said Mauritius Deputy Prime Minister Rama Sithanen here on Saturday. Participating in a meeting organised by the Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) and Southern India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) in association with the Republic of Mauritius, the Deputy Prime Minister said investment in his country would provide investors a spring board for business opportunities in Eastern and Southern Africa markets, which had a huge untapped potential. The Mauritius government, offered to investors specially designed incentives, which could be in the form of lower corporate tax, exemption from custom duty on equipment and raw materials, preferential loan rates and reduced tariff for power and water. Dividend was exempted from tax and free repatriation of profits, dividends and capital was allowed.

The Indian Express, 30 October, 2005

Delhi Blasts: The world speaks

Pakistan strongly condemns the terrorist attacks in New Delhi, which have resulted in the loss of a number of innocent lives. The attack in a crowded market place is a criminal act of terrorism. The people and government of Pakistan are shocked at this barbaric act and express deep sympathy with the families of the victims- Pakistan Foreign Office The Secretary General is appalled by and condemns the series of terrorist bombings which have resulted in many deaths in the Indian capital,- UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan We condemn these attacks in the strongest possible terms. It is a

cowardly act of violence. We hope the perpetrators are swiftly identified and brought to justice,- US State Department I utterly condemn the appalling attacks in Delhi, which appear to have been targeted at heavily populated areas to produce maximum carnage.... The attacks are yet another example of terrorists' cynical and callous disregard for human life,- British Foreign Minister Jack Straw This was a most unfortunate, cowardly and heinous act, no human being or nation can tolerate it. The people of South Asia are determined to fight against such bloodletting terrorism and eliminate this crime against humanity from the region- Bangladesh Foreign , Minister M. Morshed Khan.

The Hindu, 31 October 2005

Agreement on opening of LoC (B. Muralidhar Reddy)

Islamabad: India and Pakistan have agreed to open five points across the Line of Control (LoC) from November 7 to enable people on both sides to participate in earthquake relief and reconstruction work. The understanding came early on Sunday after four rounds of official talks. The Pakistan delegation was headed by Syed Ibne Abbas, Director-General (South Asia), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Indian delegation by Dilip Sinha, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs. A joint statement listed Nauseri-Tithwal; Chakoti-Uri; Hajipur-Uri; Rawalakot-Poonch and Tattapani-Mendhar as the agreed routes from where people would be allowed to cross. It is for the first time since Partition that LoC is being thrown open to enable people cross over on feet. After the launch of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service in April, opening of these routes for travel and a truck service on the bus route was on the dialogue table.

The Statesman, 31 October, 2005

World blasts Delhi attack

Washington, Oct. 30. - From Washington to Pakistan, global leaders expressed outrage over bomb blasts that killed 61 people in crowded markets in India's capital. Condolences poured into New Delhi as Indian investigators tried to discover who set off the three explosions yesterday one on a bus and two in markets, days before the major Hindu festival of Diwali. "These explosions, in which tens of human lives were lost and caused sufferings to many innocent people, took place on the eve of bright and delightful Indian festival of Diwali, which is celebrated over the centuries to mark the victory of good over evil," Mr Valdimir Putin said. UN secretary General Mr Kofi Annan joined the international community in strongly condemning the deadly blasts in New Delhi, saying that he was "appalled" and "shocked" at the "barbaric atrocity and outrage."