

About the Author



Avtar Singh Bhasin (b.1935) B.A (Hons); M. A in History. Initially he had short stint of service in the National Archives of India and the Ministry of Defence before joining the Ministry of External Affairs where he served for three decades, retiring in 1993 as Director of Historical Division. He has served in the Indian missions in Kathmandu, Bonn, Vienna and Lagos. He travelled to several other countries in the discharge of his duties in the Ministry. Some of the countries visited were USA, China, South Africa, Kenya, Zambia, Malawi, Botswana, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus etc. He was member of several ministerial and official delegations for discussions with various countries both in India and abroad.

Since his retirement he has taken to academic research. He was Senior Fellow of the Indian Council of Historical Research from 1994 to 1996. He was Honorary Fellow of the Institute of Contemporary Studies, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library from 1997 to 2001. He has authored and edited several books on South Asian affairs. He also contributed several articles in newspapers on developments in the neighbouring countries. His seventy-five pieces on Partition and Freedom were published in the Asian Age consecutively from June 1 to August 14, 1997 coinciding with the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Indian Independence.

INDIA'S FOREIGN RELATIONS - 2007
DOCUMENTS
PART – I

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Edited and Introduced by:
AVTAR SINGH BHASIN

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1. She succeeded Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam on July 25, 2007.

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INDIA'S FOREIGN RELATIONS – 2007

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PREFACE

The series India's Foreign Relations, showcasing, as the name implies, documents on India's foreign relations is published annually. Since its launch in 2005, volumes for 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006 have made their appearance. The present is, therefore, the 6th in the series. It is published in cooperation with the Public Diplomacy Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

A look at the Contents would show that the debate on India – US Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation Agreement dominated the foreign policy discourse during the year. The position taken by the Left Parties on the subject was an important element in this debate. Since the Left Parties provide outside support to the Government in Parliament, their stand on this vital policy matter, impacted the domestic politics of the country. The Bharatiya Janata Party, as the principal opposition party and the party which initiated the process of strategic cooperation with the United States when it was in power, under the innocuous heading “Next Step in the Strategic Partnership” also found fault with the proposed agreement on several counts. To give a comprehensive picture of the developments during the year, it became necessary, therefore, to deviate from the past practice of including only the official documents in the compendiums in this series. As would be observed, the statements and resolutions of the Left Parties and the BJP on the subject have been given a place in the Appendix attached to Section-II on Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation. To complete the picture, editorials in the national newspapers and views of the intellectual community on both sides of the spectrum have also been included.

As relations with the United States were dominated by the debate on Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation, readers are advised to look at this section also when looking for documents on India – United States relations and *vice a versa*.

The documents have been arranged thematically, region-wise and chronologically. A large number of agreements of diverse nature were signed with various countries during high level visits abroad and in India in the course of the year. Considering the increasing bulk of the collection, agreements that have bearing on strategic and foreign policy issues alone have been included here. However, in the case of neighbouring countries, as per past practice, all agreements even of non-political and non-strategic nature would be found, since India's relations with its neighbours need to be covered comprehensively.

In reproducing the documents every care has been taken to adhere to the original text in every manner including in terms of spellings of proper nouns and punctuations.

For many years, I have been making use of the library of the India International Centre. and received a large measure of logistical support from the officers and staff of the Library. I owe a debt of gratitude to them.

As in the past, preparation of this volume, in such a short time after the close of the year, needed the cooperation of a large number of officers of the Ministry of External Affairs. The list is too long and I express my apologies for not being able to list them individually in expressing my gratitude. However, the names that must find mention are those of Shri Amit Dasgupta, Shri Narender Singh and Dr. Kajal Bhat. My thanks to them. Shri TCA Rangachari has been generous with his time to fine tune the introduction. Thank you, Sir. However, the views expressed in the introduction are only mine and I take full responsibility for them. I too own the responsibility for any deficiency or inadequacy that may be otherwise found in this work.

Avtar Singh Bhasin

**New Delhi,
February 20, 2008.**

INTRODUCTION

The year 2007 was momentous in the history of India's foreign relations since independence in more ways than one. It was for the first time that an issue of foreign policy— the Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation Agreement with the United States— dominated the discourse of domestic politics and evoked interest on a wide spectrum as never before. It divided the public opinion both vertically and horizontally. It is not only that some political parties differed with the Government on the desirability or otherwise of the agreement, it threatened to upset the ruling coalition government as well. The intellectual community too stood divided vertically. All this, in turn, found expression in large-scale media analysis of the issues involved, for several months. Nuclear scientists, strategic and security experts and political analysts came out with a plethora of articles in the media.

2. The trend of the discussions on civil nuclear energy cooperation with the United States since the Joint Declaration of July 2005, both inside and outside of the parliament, left one with the impression that the proposal was sailing rather smoothly, through the rough waters of Indian politics. The public opinion, particularly the nuclear scientists, appeared enthusiastic at the prospects of the nuclear apartheid that India suffered and endured since the Pokharan – I, nearing its end. There were indeed some hiccups now and then. The government's deft handling by explaining the nuances helped to clear many a cloud, both grey and dark. There were certainly occasions when some pronouncements in the United States Congress and media on the question of proliferation and accusing the US Administration of rewarding India for violating the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, raised eye brows in India but it did not take much time for the government to clarify the position. The United States establishment too extended a helping hand with its assurances and it assuaged the ruffled feathers.

3. Nonetheless no major roadblocks were anticipated in tying the formal knot and sewing up the agreement. The Hyde Act passed by the US Congress and assented to by the U. S. President in 2006, amending the US Atomic Energy Act, 1954, was only an enabling legislation that paved the way for Washington to enter into negotiations with India for cooperation in the civil nuclear energy cooperation. Given the sensitivities of the issues involved on both sides, it took several rounds of discussions between the senior officials of the two countries before an acceptable draft of an agreement emerged, initialed and frozen for final signatures at appropriate levels of the two governments but after the necessary constitutional procedures and other pre-conditions had been gone through. To Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Agreement was a harbinger of great change. In his speech at the dedication ceremony of the Units 3 & 4 of the Tarapur Atomic Power Plant on August 31, he said: "India cannot afford to miss the nuclear bus," and added "There is today talk the world over of a nuclear renaissance, and we cannot afford to miss the bus or lag behind these global developments."
4. The draft, soon after it was made public after Cabinet approval, saw dissenting voices being raised on some fronts. The nuclear establishment and the scientific community by and large were supportive of the agreement and even euphoric that the lifting of the curbs on nuclear cooperation would give a fresh impetus to nuclear research in the country.
5. The point to underline here is that the initialed draft was meant not only to make the path smooth for future cooperation with the United States alone but also with the other 45 countries constituting the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) for the civil nuclear energy trade. It is pertinent to point out that the sanctions regime that was imposed on India in the aftermath of the Pokharan- II in May 1998, did not take much time to

fizzle out. However, the denial regime of the Pokharan - I continues to trouble us particularly our nuclear establishment till this day.

6. The official team that negotiated the final draft of the 1 2 3 agreement felt satisfied for having accomplished a difficult task successfully. It was convinced that all the essential Indian concerns were taken care of, even as some adjustments were made to meet the concerns of the other party. An Agreement by its very nature is a compromise document of the sovereign interests of sovereign powers putting their seal to it.
7. In anticipation of the end to the nuclear denial regime, both France and Russia, keen on nuclear cooperation with India, had signed in-principle agreements of intent to help New Delhi with its civil nuclear energy development programme. In doing so, both left New Delhi in no doubt that the actual implementation would have to wait, until India signed the India-specific safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and successfully negotiated with the NSG countries for withdrawal of the restrictions on nuclear trade that were in place, the pre-requisite of the now negotiated 1 2 3 agreement too.
8. In the clutter of the debate that followed the publication of the 1 2 3 agreement on the India-US Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation, the critics lost sight of the fact that in the post-Second World War, concept of sovereignty as an absolute factor, stood heavily eroded. The war itself had shaken notions such as citizenship, national sovereignty and the nation state. Assumptions accepted in pre-war world were swept away by the avalanche of the war. In more than half a century since then, the shape of the world has changed. There was no purpose in clinging to a world that had gone away. As for the horrors, they continue to spill over into distant corners of the globe in new forms devastating civil societies.

There are new challenges which need new responses.

9. Today, we swear by the *mantra* of interdependence. We pride ourselves as living in a global village. The violation of human rights, and undermining of democratic institutions in any country, invites the ire of civil society every where. The governments routinely take position on violation of these norms in any part of the world. Unlike in the past, such expression of concern is considered as legitimate. The erring governments today cannot get away by taking the plea that the issue falls in their domestic domain. They do defer to expression of such concerns. It is not uncommon for governments to amend their labour laws, under pressure of civil society and international organizations because of the concern shown by them on some aspect of their operation, like employment of child labour in manufacturing. Environmental concern is another issue on which nations are being called upon to formulate legislations in line with global needs and requirements. Apex international and national entities such as WTO, EU, chambers of commerce and industry, even voluntary organizations and NGOs, play no less important role in shaping responses to issues of foreign and economic policies and some times the policy itself.
10. In an inter-dependent world, cooperation among nations is possible only on openly and freely negotiated and mutually accepted terms based on give and take. The high growth and social progress, hitherto the attribute of domestic politics have today assumed international ramifications. Neither is possible without foreign investments and modern technology. Narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor, maintaining economic vitality and efficiency, attracting greater foreign investments and enhancing the competitiveness of indigenous industry against globalizing trends, promoting mega projects and at the same time helping the smaller

entrepreneurs to stand competition and survive, are the challenges which no longer can be met in isolation and standing aloof. All these challenges have global dimensions and could be met only in concert with the international community on terms acceptable to all.

11. We, in India, because of our historical experience, are paranoid with the idea of multinational and trans-national entities gulping Indian industry and business and perhaps us, as a nation, politically. We need to get out of the East India Company syndrome. India has come a long way in the last six decades since independence. We are today witness to a phenomenon where Indians are buying out multinationals and transnational conglomerates. This is happening because our national entities have come out of the cocoons in which they were wrapped for too long. They have torn themselves away from the apron strings of the government. They are now playing in an international environment and competing with the best in the world.
12. The strategic need for clean energy, given the new found global concern for environment, poses a new challenge to the foreign policy establishment. India's economic resurgence demands far greater interaction with external factors than before. We need access to international markets, new sources of energy, advanced technologies, and foreign investments on a scale much larger than in the decades following independence. This calls for increasing the bandwidth of our political engagement with the outside world. This means evolving newer responses to the ever-changing ground realities in a world full of uncertainties. In this scenario our response in terms of instruments of policy, tactics and strategy could not be the same as it has been till the other day.
13. In the 21st century there are new and diverse challenges. Each challenge generates a new opportunity and *vice-a* –

versa. We find ourselves at the threshold of an era full of new opportunities. But opportunities run after those who know how to grab them and make best use of them. The Political, economic, environmental and demographic challenges impinge on intra-state conduct of relations. As the complexity and intensity of these challenges dawn on us, the realization of greater interdependence of peoples and nations requiring collective action becomes indeed urgent and critical. It is the acceptance of these basic urges of the globalized world that the World Trade Organization was established that stands tall today. Since development and democracy are mutually reinforcing, the rule of law is equally critical for ensuring economic progress and human development, which in turn contributes to the consolidation of peace.

14. As stated above, interaction among sovereign countries is essentially a matching of sovereign but competing interests. It involves living with contradictions. No written document of any nature can spell out every thing on earth in black and white. There are grey areas which are left vague and unexplained. Reconciling those calls for ingenuity of the highest order. It is the outcome of this interaction that constitutes international relations called diplomacy. Great nations have diverse interests and contradictory challenges to meet. There cannot be a strait jacket or a single approach to them. What is good in one situation may not answer the needs of another since the ground realities may differ. Reconciling these contradictions is an attribute of diplomacy too.
15. A treaty or an agreement is only a statement of broad principles. The taste of the pudding lies in its eating. In the ultimate analysis it is how we conduct ourselves and what benefits we draw out of it, to strengthen ourselves socially and economically would determine the course of our destiny

and not merely a piece of paper on which an agreement may be written.

16. It was to emphasize these positive attributes of the 1 2 3 Agreement that the Prime Minister in his speech in the Lok Sabha on August 13 said:

“...the Agreement is about civil nuclear energy cooperation. It is an Agreement between two States possessing advanced nuclear technologies, both parties having the same benefits and advantages. The significance of the Agreement lies in the fact that when brought into effect, it will open the way for full civil nuclear energy cooperation between India and the United States. We have negotiated this Agreement as an equal partner, precisely because of the achievements of our scientists and technologists in overcoming the barriers placed around us in the past. This is an Agreement based on the principle of mutual benefit.”

17. Assuring the nation through the Parliament, the Prime Minister in the same speech, left no body in any doubt that India cannot be made to compromise on its independence of action. He said:

“...the pursuit of a foreign policy that is independent in its judgement is a legacy of our founding fathers and an abiding commitment of our Government. India is too large and too important a country to have the independence of its foreign policy taken away by any power. Today, India stands on the world stage as an influential and respected member of the international community. There is independence in our thought and independence in our actions.... I would like to reiterate that our engagement today with all global powers like US,

Russia, China, EU, UK, France, Germany and Japan is unprecedented. Engagement with West, East, South East and Central Asia has been significantly stepped up with visible results. We are building new frontiers in our ties with Africa and Latin America. In South Asia we seek to develop a peaceful environment, one which is conducive to ambitious developmental targets. I urge those who question our commitment to an independent foreign policy to display the same degree of confidence in India, as others from outside do...”

18. In appealing the Parliament to support the agreement that the Government had worked out with the United States, the Prime Minister said:

“...there is no question that we will ever compromise, in any manner, our independent foreign policy. We shall retain our strategic autonomy. At the same time, we must not forget India's long-standing commitment to the noble ideas of nuclear disarmament and our refusal to participate in any arms race, including a nuclear arms race..... Our negotiators deserve credit for delivering to the nation an Agreement, which can potentially transform the economic prospects of our country. It is an Agreement that will enable us to meet the twin challenges of energy security and environmental sustainability, and remove the technology denial regimes that have, for decades, been a major constraint on our development. At the same time, it will bring India the recognition it deserves thanks to the outstanding achievements of our scientists in nuclear and space sciences as well as other high technology areas.”

19. The assurances extended by the Prime Minister and the External Affairs Minister both in and outside of Parliament did not take the edge off the criticism of the coalition partners in Left Parties and the main Opposition Party, the Bharatiya Janata Party. For different reasons they remained skeptical of the agreement and the assurances extended to them by the Government.
20. The Bharatiya Janata Party's opposition was predicated mainly on three counts—(i) the Agreement compromised India's nuclear deterrent and future weaponization programme; (ii) compromised India's foreign policy and (iii) made Indian foreign policy subservient. Many found the BJP's opposition ironic, in that it was the party, which when in power had authored the programme. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, when he initially explained the contours of the agreement to the BJP leadership, including the former Prime Minister, had said: "I have accomplished what you had initiated". That Party's appreciation of the official team for accomplishing a difficult task successfully did not go unnoticed.
21. The Left parties saw the agreement in a different perspective. They appeared to be paranoid by past prejudices. They were afraid that the Agreement would bind India in an unholy alliance with the United States to sub-serve its global foreign policy goals. In this context India's attitude to Iran's nuclear programme was touted as an example. The Left, too had convinced itself that nuclear energy was not the best and only option to meet the ends of energy security. It was expensive as compared to thermal and hydro power, they claimed. Invoking the National Common Minimum Programme, agreed upon between the United Progressive Alliance and the Left Parties at the time of formation of the Government, following the 2004 general elections, the Left said it was not on its agenda. They further argued that the

Agreement did not meet the assurances held out by the Prime Minister in the past with regard to (i) uninterrupted nuclear fuel supplies; (ii) certain dual use technologies which were barred under the Agreement; and (iii) the 1 2 3 Agreement can be terminated at the discretion of the USA but India would assume certain obligations in perpetuity under the IAEA Safeguard Agreement.

22. The External Affairs Minister in his speech in the Lok Sabha on August 16 assured the nation that there were no grounds to raise doubts about India's ability to maintain its independence of action in respect to both foreign and nuclear policies. He too tried to convince the unconvinced that the agreement did not bar India from conducting a nuclear test, if it became necessary. Mr. Mukherjee said:

"India has the sovereign right to test and would do so if it is necessary in national interest. The only restraint is our voluntary unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, declared by the previous government and being continued by the successor government. There is nothing in the bilateral agreement that would tie the hands of a future government or legally constrain its options. A decision to undertake a future nuclear test would be India's sovereign decision, resting solely with the Government of India.

Nowhere in the bilateral agreement on Cooperation for Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy with the United States of America is testing mentioned. The bilateral cooperation agreement contains elaborate provisions in Articles 5 and 14 to ensure the continuous operation of India's reactors. These include fuel supply assurances, the right to take corrective measures, and a strategic fuel reserve for the life-

time of India's reactors in case of cessation of co-operation."

23. The Left Parties though not part of the ruling United Progressive Alliance were nevertheless important allies, standing in support of the Government, from outside. Their opinion could not be brushed aside. The Government felt obliged to take them on board. To reconcile the differences separating the Alliance and the Left on this issue, a Committee consisting of leaders of both the sides is making efforts to create the necessary consensus that would enable the government to fulfil its international commitment. Meanwhile the Government has commenced negotiations with the International Atomic Energy Agency for an India specific safeguards agreement for the civil nuclear cooperation.
24. As the year 2007 came to a close, the negotiations with the IAEA remained inconclusive. It is hoped that the final agreement would meet the concerns of all and a national consensus would emerge which would enable India to go ahead with the agreement with the United States. Meanwhile several countries principally Russia and France are waiting to extend their helping hand to India to meet its quest for clean energy.
25. Having said that, one might hasten to add that India remains committed to the goal of universal disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament on a universal basis. The Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon in his speech at the International Institute of Strategic studies said as much on May 3rd. He said:

"As for the threat from weapons of mass destruction to international security, we believe that general and complete disarmament including nuclear disarmament must remain on the international

agenda. India's status as a Nuclear Weapon State does not diminish its commitment to the objective of a nuclear weapon free world. Aspiring for a non-violent world order, through global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament continues to be an important plank of our nuclear policy that is characterized by restraint, responsibility, transparency, predictability and a defensive orientation. We maintain our voluntary moratorium on tests, are ready to engage in negotiations in a non-discriminatory Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, and we enforce strict and comprehensive export controls, which have now been harmonized with those of the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime. We have scrupulously not transferred enrichment and reprocessing technologies to countries that do not have them, and have supported international efforts to halt their spread. Recent events have shown that a new global consensus on non-proliferation is required, based on an equal partnership of responsible states. As a responsible nuclear power with impeccable credentials on non-proliferation, we are ready to be a partner against proliferation, working closely to create a new consensus on which to move forward."

II

26. In the recent years, India's 'Look East Policy' has taken firm roots. Relations with East and South-East Asia received a shot in the arm by New Delhi deciding to integrate the economic development of the States of the North-East India with the region. This part of India on the periphery of the Southeast Asia is a natural bridge between India and Southeast Asia. The essence of this policy was articulated by the External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee, on October

31 at a meeting in New Delhi, participated among others, by Minister for Development of North Eastern Region Mani Shankar Aiyar and Chief Ministers of all the North Eastern States besides the Union Ministers of Home, Defence, Finance, Road Transport and Highways. Mr. Mukherjee said:

“Essentially, what we are looking at here is a new paradigm of development whereby our foreign policy initiatives blend seamlessly into our national economic development. Given that we have, over 15 years of pursuing our Look East Policy, put in place certain diplomatic and political structures, there is need now to make these structures work for our North Eastern Region. Diplomatic initiatives urgently need to be converted into commercial opportunities. For this purpose, MEA will work in close cooperation with the Ministry for the Development of the North Eastern Region, the Planning Commission, all economic ministries and the State governments.”

27. The interventions made by the Chief Ministers of North Eastern States at the meeting focused primarily on the present state of connectivity and of infrastructure available in the North Eastern States, capacity building, future potential for export and tourism, the possibility of institutional cooperation in training and research and on-going action being taken by State Governments with a view to dovetail national development strategies with various foreign policy initiatives. Mr. Mukherjee on his part assured that the Ministry of External Affairs “will take all the necessary initiatives in the pursuit of Look East Policy, as would especially benefit the North East region of India. The development policies of the northeastern region should also be directed to attain greater connectivity with the region next door.”
28. The Public Diplomacy Division of the Ministry of External Affairs during the course of the year organized seminars and

discussions in the northeast to get the input from a larger body of public opinion in its push to the Look East Policy. This was a new experience, particularly for the people of the Northeastern region, who in the past found themselves at the margins in the formulations of foreign policy. It marked a paradigm shift from the standard practice whereby the foreign relations were treated as an esoteric subject for discussion among a few occupying the official hierarchy, academia and the intellectuals. The Public Diplomacy Division is, to that extent, the harbinger of a change in mindset. There is realization that the issues, even of foreign policy, have a bearing on the lives of the people at large, and they needed to be involved in the debate and discussion to formulate an inclusive policy.

29. Bilateral ministerial visits to some of these countries and the East Asia and ASEAN Summits participated in by the Prime Minister himself had helped to project the invigorated image of India in the region, where the subtext is the pending challenge in negotiating bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements. Another dimension of this policy in the coming years would be the ability of New Delhi to go along with the initiative of quadripartite forum of major Asia-Pacific Democracies given the Chinese discomfort.
30. It is the ancient links of India to the greater East Asian region that highlighted the overarching cultural setting in the year 2007. The exhibition "On the Nalanda Trail" in Singapore that coincided with the ASEAN Summit and the revival of the Nalanda University, was a reminder to the East Asian countries of the links that ancient India had with them. It sought to emphasize the cultural homogeneity of the region with India.
31. In this context it would be relevant to recall the remarks of Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the reception hosted by him for the EAS leaders: "The ancient university

in Nalanda was not just devoted to Buddhist studies. It was also a first-class educational institution and the most global university of its time. ... The new Nalanda (university) should strive to perform a role consistent with this original ethos and vision. It should be a great intellectual centre, an icon of the Asian renaissance. ... It should also be a centre of civilisational dialogue and inter-faith understanding as the original Nalanda once was. In this way, the Nalanda project can be an inspiration for the future of Asia.”

32. The success of Northeast as the cutting edge of our Look East Policy, could pave the way for similar developments in other bordering areas as well. The problems of development and of administration of areas bordering Bihar and Nepal have a lot in common; Indian Punjab with the Pakistani Punjab, Tamil Nadu with Sri Lanka and West Bengal with Bangladesh. As the political situation in the neighbouring countries stabilizes in course of time, the State Governments in India could be counted upon to spearhead a new policy momentum towards these regions. Until then, it would be fruitful for these regions to be conscious and aware of the developmental trends across their borders. As the classic diplomacy develops new shibboleths under the pressure of globalization, the foreign policy establishment too needs to look for new instruments in the coming decades. This could perhaps be one of them!!

III

33. In the year 2007 several milestones in bilateral relations between India and China were reached. The high point of this relationship was the new area of cooperation in the defence sector. The first defence dialogue under the MOU on Defence Cooperation signed in 2006 took place in November. General JJ Singh, Chief of the Army Staff visited China in May and received a warm welcome. In

June the Defence Minister during his visit to Singapore to take part in the Security Dialogue met with the Chinese Deputy Chief of General Staff Gen. Zhang Qinsheng. The first ever joint military exercises between the armies of the two countries were held in the third week of December in the Chinese province of Yunnan. The Spokesperson of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing described the exercises as “helpful in building mutual trust and promoting cooperation” and favoured an increase in such activities to improve stability and security in the region. External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee described them as part of security strategy and said they would continue. It was indeed a new and important chapter in Sino-Indian relations.

34. As a confidence building measure, the Foreign Ministries of the two countries have been linked by a hot line. New Consulates have started operating in Guangzhou in China and Kolkata in India. The Chinese airlines have added new air-routes and flights between the two countries. China and India also mutually hosted the Year of Culture in each others countries.
35. To find a solution to the boundary question three rounds of dialogue between the Special Representatives of the two countries took place in 2007. Altogether eleven sessions of boundary talks, in the four years since the Special Representatives were appointed for this purpose in 2003, have been held.
36. On October 25 the External Affairs Minister told a press conference in Harbin, on the sidelines of the India-China-Russia Trilateral Summit that at the 11th round of boundary talks held in September, it had been decided to set up a Working Group to prepare the framework for the resolution of the boundary question. He expected some thing positive

to come out of this new exercise and said: “Let us wait for the recommendations of the Working Group.”

37. In recent months the un-demarcated Line of Actual Control (LAC) held by the two countries on the ground, gave rise to some misunderstanding. The media reports said that the Chinese were guilty of intrusions into the Indian territory in the Eastern Sector. The Government of India in trying to allay these apprehensions said in Parliament on November 22 that this was necessarily due to “the perceptions of the LAC,” which overlapped “at many places”.
38. Despite this, the reports of ‘intrusions’ persisted and the Defence Minister on December 1 assured the suspecting media: “There was no incursion by the Chinese troops in Indian territory, be it in Sikkim or Arunachal Pradesh.” He however added that there might have been isolated incidents on the borders arising out of the difference of perception on territorial jurisdiction between the two countries and expressed confidence that all minor problems and differences of perception would be resolved through negotiations. He described China as “our strategic partner”.
39. At the political level there were several high level meetings between the leaders of the two countries. The Prime Minister met the Chinese President Hu Jintao in Berlin on the sidelines of the G-8 Outreach Conference. He utilized this opportunity to allay Chinese apprehension that India by joining the United States, Japan, and Australia in a quadrilateral cooperation was ganging up against China. He assured Beijing that the quadripartite was only for exchange of views on developments from their experiences as democracies. It had no security implications and the Chinese President was satisfied with this clarification.
40. The Prime Minister met the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao twice—once in Cebu (Philippines) in January and second

time in Singapore in November on the occasion of the India-ASEAN Summit. At the Singapore Summit the two leaders reiterated their readiness to take the India-China Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity to a new level. Premier Wen conveyed that friendship with India was the strategic and long term objective of China. The Prime Minister reiterated to Premier Wen that India attached great importance to its partnership with China, and was resolved to ensuring the comprehensive development of bilateral relations for mutual benefit and on the basis of mutual sensitivity to each others' concerns. Both the leaders reiterated their readiness, to see a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution to the Boundary Question. They too expressed satisfaction at the progress that is being made by the Special Representatives in this regard.

41. The Chinese Foreign Ministry described the meeting between the two leaders as marking "long-term friendship, mutually beneficial cooperation and common development between the two countries (which) will have a profound impact on Asia and the world at large. Facts prove that the development of friendship and cooperation between China and India has brought pragmatic benefits to the two peoples and has promoted South-South cooperation as well as peace and development in the world". On the question of border talks, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said it was his Government's political will to settle the border issue and his country "will make joint efforts with China to overcome difficulties and push forward the negotiation over it, under the political principles reached by the two countries."
42. According to the Indian officials, Mr. Wen was "supportive of international civil nuclear energy cooperation with India." It may be added in parenthesis that the visit of Dr. Manmohan Singh to China in January 2008 provided an opportunity to the leaders of the two countries to take the friendship to still

higher levels and help in resolving the outstanding question of the boundary to the satisfaction of both the countries.

43. On the question of expansion of trade and other economic relations, External Affairs Minister Mr. Mukherjee, speaking on June 16 to journalists on the sidelines of a seminar on “Look East Policy,” organized by the Public Diplomacy Division of the Ministry of External Affairs in Shillong, underlined the role of trade in the promotion of bilateral relations and said issues such as trade and commerce with China could not be kept pending till the resolution of the border dispute. Bilateral trade is galloping forward. In 2006, the trade volume between the two countries had crossed 25 billion US dollars, a rise of 33.8 per cent over 2005. That in itself was an increase of 37 per cent over 2004. The bilateral trade in 2007 has galloped to \$ 38.5 billion thus almost touching the target set for 2010 of \$ 40 billion two years in advance. It is the vision of the leaders of the two countries that this figure would surpass 60 billion US dollars by 2010. It is another matter that India which had a surplus balance of trade with China only a few years ago is now running a deficit. The deficit which was around US \$ 1 billion in 2001, touched \$ 11 billion in 2007. The other disquieting feature of this trade for India was that while Chinese exports were mostly capital and manufactured goods, India’s export basket consisted mostly of primary goods. Along with the rising trend in trade, there was an increase in the presence of Indian business and industry, banks, consultants and law firms in China.
44. China is pressing a reluctant India for a Regional Trade Agreement as well as for recognition of China as a market economy. New Delhi is shying away from both because of the suspicions of the Indian business and Industry that there were hidden subsidies in Chinese pricing system and it lacked transparency. These issues would form part of the India-China economic agenda in 2008.

IV

45. With Japan there is an all-round relationship covering several fields of activity. Apart from strategic and global partnership that India enjoys with Japan, the economic relationship has several hopeful features. A major project already under execution is the Delhi Metro. Those on the anvil are dedicated freight corridors – Delhi-Mumbai, Delhi-Kolkata; and a Delhi-Mumbai industrial corridor. The bilateral trade is expected to touch the level of US \$ 20 billion by 2010. During the visit of the Japanese Prime Minister to New Delhi in August, after the successful visit of Dr. Manmohan Singh to Japan in December 2006, the importance of delivering a high-quality and mutually beneficial EPA/CEPA that reflected the strategic importance of bilateral relations and fully harnesses the potential of the economic relationship, was reaffirmed.
46. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe presence in New Delhi in August provided the opportunity to further strengthen the strategic partnership and cooperation in various fields. The visit set forth a road-map for “New Dimensions to the Strategic and Global Partnership” between the two countries in fields, like maintaining the safety and security of sea lanes in the Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions, and fight against transnational crimes, terrorism, piracy and proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction.
47. A system of annual strategic dialogue between the foreign ministers of the two countries, starting with the talks held in March 2007, injected a new dynamism in the bilateral relations. A new chapter in this direction was the series of decisions between the two prime ministers, to continue to hold regular dialogue between the National Security Advisor of India and the Japanese counterpart, commencement of bi-annual Foreign Secretary/Vice Minister level dialogue and the launch of an exchange programme of young diplomats in order to promote mutual understanding between the two Foreign Offices.

48. The new paradigm shift was the recognition of the two prime ministers that “common interests of the two countries in the defence and security fields require steady and qualitative up-gradation of cooperation between the two sides, including inter alia the expansion of the annual calendar of cooperation and exchanges relating to defence and security, regular Defence Policy Dialogue, cooperation in sharing of experience in international peace cooperation under the aegis of the United Nations and counter-terrorism, information sharing in important areas of mutual interest, technical exchange, joint exercises and training and talks between the services. The two leaders welcomed the participation of the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force in the multilateral maritime exercise ‘Malabar’ ” held in September 2007 in the Bay of Bengal along with the navies of the US and Australia.

V

49. The vibrancy in India-Russian relations was marked by the exchange of visits by Russian President and the Indian Prime Minister during the year. The year 2007 also marked the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. President Putin was also the Chief Guest at the Indian Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi. The visit provided the opportunity to the two countries to reconfirm their resolve to enhance mutual cooperation to promote the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Recognising that Russia “remains indispensable to the core of India’s foreign policy interests,” Dr. Manmohan Singh sought a “comprehensive re-engagement (with Russia) that would impart new momentum and carry our strategic partnership to new heights.” All this was manifest in several agreements negotiated during the year between the two countries such as joint development of Multi-role transport aircraft, fifth generation fighter aircraft, cooperation in high technology sectors like space, science and technology,

information and communication, cooperation in Russian Global Navigation Satellite System etc.

50. The Foreign Office Consultations between the two countries in April offered an opportunity to the two countries to discuss such issues as Afghanistan, Iran's nuclear programme, Iraq and the Middle East, Central Asia, India-Russia-China trilateral cooperation and cooperation with EU and NATO, and reforms of the UN, international and transnational terrorism and narco-trafficking etc. External Affairs Minister visited Moscow in October for the Inter-governmental Commission meeting. It discussed major areas of bilateral cooperation relating to trade, commerce, investment, energy, science, technology, services, metallurgy, and culture, besides discussing high technology. The annual trade which is around four billion US dollars was agreed to be still below its potential and hence it was agreed to take steps to boost it further.
51. Although the Joint Commission is a government-to-government forum, enlarging its scope, it discussed the role of private sector in furthering economic cooperation between the two countries. The first India-Russia Forum on Trade and Investment was held in India in February. The Joint Study Group set up to analyse the bilateral trade and economic cooperation, finalized its report in July. There is significant collaboration among the hydrocarbon, power and energy related organizations in the two countries and there was agreement to increase it further. The integrated Long Term Programme for Scientific and Technological Cooperation completed its twenty years. For functional reasons it was decided to set up a new Working Group on Science and Technology and to re-designate the existing Working Group on Technologies as the Working Group on Information and Communication technologies. The India-Russia cooperation in Defence is on a trajectory to reach new heights with the

signing of the Agreement for development and production of Multi-role Transport Aircraft in October during the visit of Defence Minister. There was of course some misunderstanding on the cost of refurbished Admiral Gorshkov, and its supply schedule, which it is hoped would be resolved after discussions.

52. The high point of the India-Russia relations was the visit of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Russia at the end of the year. Before his departure for Moscow the Prime Minister described the India - Russian relations as “an enduring bond of friendship” and as a factor “of peace and stability in the region and beyond”. The Prime Minister expressed his extreme satisfaction on his discussions with President Putin. The Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon told the media that the restricted meeting between Prime Minister and President Putin that preceded delegation level talks went on for more than two hours, which was unprecedented for such interactions, and was marked by “really warmth” and “real meeting of minds.” Expressing dissatisfaction at the present level of trade between the two countries, the Prime Minister declared that the two leaders have approved the report of the India-Russia Joint Study Group to enhance the bilateral trade to ten billion dollars by 2010 and set up a Joint Task Force to implement the recommendations of the Study Group. President Putin himself sounded euphoric when he referred to the signing of the agreement on the development and production of multi-role transport aircraft on the heels of another agreement on the joint construction of a futuristic fifth generation fighter plane and said “The two agreements open up new prospects for our cooperation in a highly sensitive area of defence.” The two countries also agreed to mount a joint space mission to the moon, to combat drug trafficking, and utilize rupee debt funds for Russian investments in India. Both the leaders voiced support for trilateral cooperation between India-China and Russia and

declared that it had been put on permanent basis with possibility for “expansion and deepening in various directions.”

VI

53. The India-Russia-China Trilateral cooperation made concrete progress when the foreign ministers of the three countries met twice during the year in stand-alone meetings. The first stand-alone meeting was held in Vladivostok on June 2, 2005. Earlier there were three other meetings, which were held on the sidelines of UN General Assembly session in 2002 and 2003 and one in Almaty in 2004 on the sidelines of the Conference on Confidence Building Measures in Asia. The Summit Meeting among the leaders of India, Russia and China took place on July 17, 2006 in St. Petersburg on the sidelines of the G-8 Outreach Conference.
54. It may be recalled that in the Joint Declaration issued at the end of the Summit meeting between Russian President Putin and Chinese President Hu Jintao in March 2006 a call was made by the two leaders to set up an institutional framework between China, Russia and India for trilateral cooperation. The Declaration said: “The two sides favour an early establishment of a mechanism of trilateral cooperation in the Russia-China-India format in the belief that this will contribute to a fuller realization of their potentials for economic development and will strengthen international efforts to stand up to the new threats and challenges.” During the visit of Hu Jintao to New Delhi in November 2006 the concept of trilateral cooperation too found expression in their Joint Declaration. It said: “The two sides positively assess the trilateral dialogue mechanism among India, China and Russia and agree that exchanges and cooperation under it should be further substantiated.”
55. The Joint Communique issued at the end of the New Delhi

Trilateral meeting of the three foreign ministers on February 14, 2007 “reaffirmed that trilateral cooperation was not directed against the interests of any other country and was, on the contrary, intended to promote international harmony and understanding and find common ground amidst divergent interests. They also emphasized the strong commitment of India, Russia and China to multilateral diplomacy.” In 2007 the second meeting was held in Harbin (China) on October 24 at which the three foreign ministers “positively assessed the important role played by the Foreign Ministers’ meeting mechanism in enhancing mutual trust and understanding and increasing trilateral exchanges and cooperation.”

56. Believing that the trilateral cooperation had excellent prospects for development they reaffirmed yet again that “trilateral cooperation is not targeted against any other country or organization and is intended to promote international harmony and mutual understanding and seeks to broaden common ground amidst divergent interests.” In their deliberations the foreign ministers discussed issues ranging from reform of the UN to climate change and world terrorism. Taking the cooperation among the three a step further from political to real issues, they decided that “working-level mechanisms of Division Head/Director-General should be established between the Ministries of the three Governments looking after agriculture, disaster management, medicine and health to explore concrete ways and methods of cooperation to the development of agricultural resources, processing of agricultural produce, research and development, capacity-building and application of technology in disaster risk mitigation, exchange of information on the prevention and control of contagious diseases and in traditional medicine, etc.”.

VII

57. India, Brazil and South Africa have put together a unique forum, (IBSA) that brings together three large multi-cultural

democracies from three different continents facing common challenges of development on a common platform. Formed in 2004, their first Summit was held in Brasilia in 2006 and the second in Pretoria (South Africa) in October 2007. It stands for enhancing cooperation in areas such as science and technology, education, agriculture, energy, culture, health, social issues, public and revenue administration. All the three countries have strongly urged for reform of the United Nations and expansion of the Security Council to represent contemporary realities and not those of the year 1945 when it was formed immediately after the Second World War. All the three are aspirants for membership of the Security Council and coordinate their efforts in that direction.

58. India had strategic partnership with both the countries on bilateral basis as well. Apart from the Summit meeting of the three Heads of Government/State, the foreign ministers of the three countries gathered in July in New Delhi for the 4th meeting of the IBSA Trilateral Commission. In September the editors from the three countries met in New Delhi. The three foreign ministers met again in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session. That meeting provided an opportunity to exchange views on a number of issues on the international agenda, topics relating to the IBSA Dialogue Forum and the IBSA Fund for Alleviation of Poverty and Hunger. They affirmed their determination to strengthen IBSA's political segment by enhancing coordination among their delegations in international fora. They once again underlined the need for reforms of the UN and expansion of the Security Council.
59. At the Pretoria Summit in October Prime Minister Manmohan Singh pointed out that "economic growth cannot happen in isolation". He said that unless all sections of society derive benefits from such growth and develop a stake in the growth process, "we will be courting social and political instability".

He was convinced that “disparities of any type – regional, gender, inter-community, inter-group – harm the growth process in the long run.” The Summit in its Tshwane Declaration recommitted itself “to vigorously pursue the deepening of South-South cooperation for sustainable development... to eradicate poverty through sustained and inclusive economic growth.” The Summit emphasized the goal of the “complete elimination of nuclear weapons and expressed concern over the lack of progress in the realization of this goal.” The Declaration pleaded for time-bound programme for elimination of nuclear weapons and “prohibit their development and production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, and to provide for their destruction.” The declaration touched subjects like climate change, security and stability in Africa, and need for settlement of conflict in areas afflicted by violence such as Sudan, Afghanistan, etc. The Summit ended with the signing of seven agreements ranging from cooperation in Customs and Tax Administration to public health, education, social issues, cultural cooperation etc. It was decided to hold the third Summit in New Delhi in 2008.

VIII

60. Environmental pollution has become a matter of great international concern and part of international discourse like other questions of war and peace. India too is concerned with the hazards of environmental degradation. In response to our national commitment to clean environment, New Delhi has taken major initiatives including adopting a National Environment Policy, 2006. It synergies environmental and economic policies and appropriate institutional mechanisms, to support the integration of three pillars of sustainable development: economic development, social development and environmental protection. It recognizes that the environmental management cannot be treated separately

from other development concerns and that the poor are seen not as a problem but as a part of the solution. The policy is bringing in new models of partnerships between the Government and the civil society.

61. As a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, India is committed to climate-friendly sustainable development. Clean energy and energy efficiency have become essential elements of our industrial policy. The Energy Conservation Act, 2001 set the energy consumption norms for each industry, energy labeling and standards for all electrical appliances, and energy-efficient building codes. The Bureau of Energy Efficiency has been established under this Act. India also has an active renewable energy programme.
62. India, in response to the problem of green house gases has been willing to join the other nations of the world to share the burden of green house gases. India's emission of green house gases is miniscule being only 4 percent of the world's emission. It, therefore has been taking the position at international fora that action by India alone would have a marginal effect on the overall emissions unless the major industrial countries took full responsibility commensurate with the emission generated by them. India was determined that its per-capita GHG emissions did not exceed those of developed countries even while pursuing policies of development and economic growth.
63. "The process of burden sharing must be fair", reminded the Prime Minister to the industrialized countries at the Berlin Outreach Conference of the G-8, and added "It should take into account where the primary responsibility for the present levels of GHG concentration rests and not perpetuate poverty among possibilities of accelerated social and economic development." Dr. Manmohan Singh had no doubt in his mind that the developing countries could cut their emissions only

at a great cost to their development which was not fair. He therefore made it clear at Berlin that “the time is not ripe for developing countries to take quantitative targets, as these would be counter-productive for their development processes.”

IX

64. The adoption by the United Nations General Assembly unanimously of a resolution on ‘International Day of Non-Violence’ piloted by India with the co-sponsorship of 142 countries to annually observe and celebrate Mahatma Gandhi’s birthday, October 2, as the “International Day of Non-Violence”, was particularly satisfying to New Delhi. The idea of promoting such a resolution originated from the Declaration adopted at the international conference on “Peace, Non-Violence and Empowerment – Gandhian Philosophy in the 21st Century” convened in New Delhi in January of 2007 to commemorate the centenary of the *Satyagraha* Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa. Attended by 91 countries and 122 organisations besides many eminent personalities, including philosophers and Nobel laureates, the participants in that conference solemnly vowed to nurture the values espoused by Mahatma Gandhi and articulated the collective yearning for a new way forward to address the problems of hunger and de-humanizing poverty, which continue to plague humanity, to build a just and equitable world where people live with dignity and in peace and harmony with each other in diverse and pluralistic societies.
65. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi who delivered the keynote address at the United Nations on October 2 to mark the first Observance of the International Day of Non-violence underlined the philosophy of the Mahatma thus: “that strength comes from righteousness, not force. Power comes from truth, not might. Victory comes from moral courage, not imposed submission.

He held that means and ends are inseparable and that in fact the means themselves shape the ends. He believed unworthy means can never produce worthy ends.”

X

66. India hosted the 14th Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in New Delhi on April 3-4. It was after some year that the summit took place as per the schedule and went through its agenda smoothly. Afghanistan having been admitted to the SAARC last year participated in the Summit for the first time. It was represented by its President Hamid Karzai. Three of the “observer countries” - China, South Korea and Japan, were represented by their Foreign Ministers. The other two observers — United States and the European Union (E.U.), sent high-level representatives.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in his inaugural address put forward new initiatives to make SAARC a more meaningful regional organisation. He offered “zero duty” access to goods from Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal, the Maldives and Bhutan. He said India would no longer insist on “reciprocity” on trade issues from many of its neighbours. (Trade issues with Pakistan, however, remained unresolved because of Pakistan’s insistence on maintaining a positive list of prohibited articles for bilateral trade.)

67. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced some other steps to accelerate the process of economic integration in the region. He hinted at visa liberalization procedures for scholars, journalists, students and those in need of medical help from SAARC countries. He spoke of the “compelling vision” he had of a rapidly developing South Asia playing an important role on the world stage. He noted with satisfaction that SAARC member-states had started resolving their bilateral differences, which had prevented it in the past from realizing its full potential.

He said that the time had come for all South Asian countries “to join hands to realize our shared destiny”.

68. Similar sentiments were echoed by other leaders too. Bangladesh Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed said that the larger and comparatively more advanced member-states had a special responsibility to aid the less developed ones. President Mahinda Rajapaksa asked for a collective response to the issue of terrorism from the member-states. He was in favour of adopting speedily a “common currency” to speed up the process of regional integration. The Pakistan Prime Minister said that the political atmosphere in South Asia still remained “vitiating by disputes and mistrust”. Mr. Shaukat Aziz highlighted the need to promote an environment of genuine peace and security in South Asia which would help reduce the “trust deficit” among member-countries. In his maiden speech President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan focussed on the issue of terrorism. He favoured the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline.

[However both India and Pakistan remained committed to the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. A meeting between the Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers led the two sides to announce that they would pursue the Iran – Pakistan – India gas pipeline project sincerely. They expressed satisfaction over the progress made so far at the technical-level talks amongst the three sides.]

69. Having said that, there was an undercurrent of feeling that SAARC had not yet managed to achieve its full potential. Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, in his interaction with the media as well as in talks with the Indian Prime Minister, did not shy away from stating that Kashmir was the most important issue standing in the way of durable peace between the two countries. During his luncheon meeting with the Indian media, he said that high-level, back-channel talks to resolve outstanding issues were making progress but the two

countries still had to traverse a long distance before a lasting solution could be found.

70. Pakistani resistance to India's suggestion for a SAARC treaty to fight terrorism and organized crime was a pointer to the "trust deficit" afflicting the organization. Other SAARC member-states such as Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, battling terrorism in their countries, were naturally supportive of the Indian initiative. However, Pakistan believed that problem of terrorism could be better tackled through bilateral arrangements. Nevertheless the New Delhi Declaration issued at the end of the summit had a clause mentioning India's initiative to prepare a draft for a SAARC Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's concluding speech exhorted the SAARC member states to implement in a meaningful and sincere manner the commitment and pledge made to root out terrorism in order to create an environment for "our endeavour to succeed". SAARC had made a commitment to fight terrorism through the SAARC Regional Convention on Terrorism of 1987 and the Additional Protocol in 2004.
71. The 14th SAARC summit, in the words of External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee was "the least contentious" held so far. The summit ended with agreements to establish a multi-campus South Asia University with its main campus in New Delhi and a SAARC Food Bank. The New Delhi Declaration highlighted the need to develop a road map for a South Asian Customs Union in "a planned and phased manner". The Declaration also stressed the speedy implementation of the South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA) agreement. The statement said that the "successful implementation of SAFTA will catalyse other areas of regional economic cooperation". It was decided to accept Iran as another "observer".

72. A South Asia Development Fund was operationalised with an initial corpus of \$300 million. The Fund would undertake specific poverty alleviation projects. The non-members would be free to contribute to the SAARC Development Fund without participating in the decision making on its utilization.
73. In his concluding remarks the Prime Minister reminded the member states that they had agreed to expedite progress on four main issues - water, including flood control; energy; food; and the environment. The year 2008 was designated as the "SAARC Year of Good Governance". Dr. Manmohan Singh said that he could "feel a new sense of purpose and determination among the leaders of SAARC". He emphasised that the "touchstone" in the efforts to revitalise SAARC had to be the difference made to the lives of "the poorest of the poor".
74. SAARC had been in existence for more than two decades. Much of its activities have been confined to the official meetings at various levels besides the annual summits. It has yet to catch the imagination of the common people in these countries in a big way. The travel procedures between the countries of the grouping remain as cumbersome as ever. Neither have the modes of travel improved. The decision by India to host a SAARC cultural extravaganza at the end of the year in New Delhi brought for the first time the youth of the SAARC countries at one platform. The experiment was a great success in that it gave an opportunity to thousands of people not only to realize how culturally the people of South Asia are bound together in a common strand but also to witness the cultural richness of the member countries.

XI

75. Last year the Prime Minister had spoken of his vision of relations with Pakistan to be so friendly and of an atmosphere of trust and confidence "that the two nations would be able

to agree on a Treaty of Peace, Security and Friendship” overcoming all hurdles. Carrying his wish and hope a step forward he hoped that by cooperating with each other we would be “releasing our collective destiny and the basis for enduring peace and prosperity in the region”.

76. With that background, the year 2007 opened on a positive note in regard to the India – Pakistan relations. External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee visited Pakistan in January. In February the Foreign Minister of Pakistan Mehmood Kasuri came to New Delhi for the Joint Commission meeting. During this round the two countries signed an agreement to reduce risks from accidents relating to nuclear weapons. This, together with the practice of exchanging annually lists of nuclear installations would go a long way in reducing the risk of any nuclear war between the two countries by accident. New Delhi was saddened by the bomb blast on the Samjhauta Express on its journey from New Delhi to Pakistan in February, which spilled the blood of innocent people. New Delhi not only assured but actually extended all possible assistance to the injured and in the return of the passengers to their homes.
77. The first meeting of the Anti-terrorism Mechanism took place in Islamabad in March. Other meetings under the Composite Dialogue arrangement were held as per schedule. However towards the later part of the year the momentum got somewhat slackened because of domestic troubles in Pakistan causing a lot of political instability. The assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in December was source of a great deal of anguish to New Delhi. The President, the Prime Minister and the External Affairs Minister sent messages of condolences on her death. The Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister visited the Pakistan Mission in New Delhi to offer condolences. One only hopes that the elections in early 2008 would throw up a stable regime in

Pakistan and the momentum of the dialogue would be restored.

78. As already stated above, the SAARC Summit gave an opportunity to the prime ministers of India and Pakistan to meet on its sidelines. Kashmir, terrorism and the Iran pipeline were the important items on their agenda. Dr. Manmohan Singh assured his Pakistani counterpart that India would share with Pakistan the results of the probe into the Samjhauta Express fire-bombing of February 19. He reiterated Government of India's decision to pay compensation to the victims of the terrorist incidents. It was also agreed to increase the number of flights between the two countries.
79. During the year, Pakistan too came under terrorist attacks in which valuable lives including that of the former prime minister were lost. The fundamentalism and religious obscurantism that had in the past received succour from the Pakistan State, now unleashed the turbulent and brutal forces that threatened to consume not only the civil society but the State of Pakistan itself. There was for once a refreshing realization in Pakistan that the forces, which in the past hurt only India, could boomerang and cause inverse damage too. Under the circumstances it is hoped that the Anti-terrorism mechanism, agreed upon between the two prime ministers in 2006, would be an effective forum for cooperation in rooting out this menace from both the countries.
80. Bhutan, with the blessings of the monarchy is taking measured steps towards a fully democratic state. It elected its 15-member National Council or the upper house of parliament in December. The elections for the lower house are now scheduled in March 2008. It may be recalled that Bhutan's transition to democracy began in 2001, when King Jigme Singye Wangchuk handed over the power of daily governance to a Council of Ministers. In 2006 he abdicated

the throne in favour of his Oxford educated son Jigme Khesar Namgyel.

81. The signing of a new Treaty of Friendship in February during the visit of the King of Bhutan was an “exemplary model of good-neighbourly relations”. The new Treaty, which is an update of the Treaty signed by the two countries in 1949, reflects the contemporary nature of Indo-Bhutan relations, and lays the firm foundation for their further development in the 21st century. It creates a framework for continued mutually beneficial cooperation in a manner that is responsive to and serves each other’s national interests.
82. In contrast, other countries in the neighbourhood continued to grapple with the problem of democratization. In Nepal the elections for the Constituent Assembly were thrice postponed for one reason or the other. Before the year 2007 closed the Maoists goaded the government to accept their demand for abolition of monarchy by adopting an amendment to the Constitution. This enabled the Maoists to return to the government as the year was ending, which it boycotted for almost three months.
83. In Bangladesh too the goal of “full restoration of democracy through peaceful, free and fair elections” still seems a little distant. In Sri Lanka the solution to the ethnic problem does not appear to be too close either despite a lot of blood letting. As the year closed the ceasefire agreement of 2002 between the government and the LTTE was in tatters, both sides paying only lip service to it. (In January 2008 the Government of Sri Lanka finally put an end to the fiction of cease-fire, by deciding to scrap it altogether)
84. In Burma, where democracy was victim of the stratocracy for a long time, fresh harsh measures caused greater distress to the people and pushed the goal of democracy far a field. In Afghanistan, where government’s efforts to restore

normalcy were thwarted by the forces of terrorism, development is the casualty along with democratic institutions.

85. In South Asia, India has emerged as an oasis of comparatively secure and stable political system providing the necessary wherewithal for peaceful, inclusive economic and social change. If in spite of this, there are signs of social unrest, it is the symptom of a society in transition undergoing dynamic changes, which the revolution of rising expectations has unleashed. To that extent, this ferment has to be viewed positively. The success of the Indian experience to manage the contradictions and diverse aspirations of a plural society peacefully is fundamental to spreading its message in its periphery, where the forces of instability are undermining democratic institutions and economic and social justice for some time. Political instability in the periphery, in turn, undermines all round development of the entire region. This is cause for concern, particularly when old sources of conflict are being compounded by new threats of nuclear proliferation, environmental degradation, terrorism, dangers to public health from sources like HIV/AIDS and Avian Flu etc.

XII

86. In the fast and ever changing global scenario, the task of the Indian diplomatic service was underlined by the External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee while inaugurating the building of the Indian Foreign Service Institute in New Delhi on the birthday of the founder of the Indian foreign policy, Jawaharlal Nehru (November 14). He said:

“...from my perspective, an essential priority for the world today has to be a new consciousness, not just among the political elites, but also among the peoples of the world, that their choices and their

actions affect all others on this planet. This consciousness is what would break down the barriers to greater global cooperation and lead to the structure and processes that are needed to address international challenges, such as climate change and energy security. And this is where the voice of India's diplomats can best be heard. However, this is a subtle task. A narrow consciousness can hardly be best communicator of a global consciousness. Therefore I would call upon our future diplomats to reflect the best of Indian civilization when interacting with the world."



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665. Statement by Permanent Representative at the UN Nirupam Sen at the meeting of open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other related matters at the 62nd session of the UNGA. 2512
New York, December 14, 2007.



