

Manmohan visits China to bolster a mutually beneficial relationship



Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and his Chinese counterpart, Wen Jiabao, address a joint press conference at the Great Hall of People in Beijing on January 14.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh on January 15 wrapped up a path-breaking trip to China by seeking improved, all-round ties between two of the world's fastest growing economies and calling for a timeframe to end their border dispute.

During his three-day visit, Singh held talks with his Chinese counterpart, Wen Jiabao, and the chemistry between the two leaders was palpable. The two countries pledged to take their two-way trade to a new high of \$60 billion by 2010. They deepened their new-found military ties and signed 11 pacts covering a range of areas. A vision statement outlined their strategic roadmap.

The agreements cover a wide spectrum, from economic planning and housing to health and culture. The Chinese print and electronic media gave prominent coverage to Singh's maiden visit to Beijing, and by the time he boarded Air India One to head home, Chinese experts on Asia were praising him profusely. Rong Ying, director of the South Asian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), described Singh as a "highly regarded and respected" man.

Hours before his departure, Singh addressed a gathering of Chinese intellectuals and urged that India and China should be at the forefront of the emergence of a more democratic international order. He declared that the UN Security Council no longer reflected the global reality. China holds a permanent seat in the Security Council, a status that India desires.

China said that it "understands and sup-

ports India's aspirations to play a greater role in the UN including in the Security Council". Indian officials described this stand as a marked step forward on Beijing's part.

Singh also told the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) that India and China, which account for a third of the world's population, needed to cooperate "in creating a world of positive externalities and mutual prosperity, rather than one based on balance of power calculations and animosity.

This involves India and China working together closely to ensure a global order in which our simultaneous development will have a positive influence not only on our own economies but also on the rest of the world."

An agreement which Singh and Wen signed after the bilateral talks made it clear that it was time to build "a relationship of friendship and trust, based on equality, in which each is sensitive to the concerns and aspirations of the other". It said India-China ties were not targeted at any country.

The two countries agreed to hold their second joint military training exercises in India this year — the first such exercise took place in China in December last year. Besides revising their bilateral trade target for 2010, the two sides decided to establish a high-level Business Leaders Forum and hold the second India-China Defence Dialogue this year.

Indian Commerce Minister Kamal Nath pointed out that India and China comprised 40 percent of the world market. Knowing well that the world was watching his mission to Beijing, Singh declared: "India-China relations are of regional and global significance".

China is now India's second largest trade partner and poised to become the largest. India is China's tenth-largest trading ally. Although trade is the current highlight of their cooperation, the two governments also agree on issues such as energy security and conservation. The two are also coming together in third countries by forging strategic business partnerships.

Highlights of the Joint Declaration

- India and China resolve to promote a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity by developing a strategic and cooperative partnership.
- They recognise that both the countries bear a significant historical responsibility to ensure comprehensive, balanced and sustainable economic and social development and to promote peace and development in Asia and the world as a whole.
- Both sides favour an open and inclusive international system and believe that drawing lines on the ground of ideologies and values is not conducive to peaceful and harmonious co-existence.
- They support comprehensive reforms in the UN including according priority to increasing the representation of the developing countries in the Security Council.
- China attaches great importance to India's position as a major developing country in international affairs.
- China supports India's aspirations to play a greater role in the UN including the Security Council.
- Both sides will strengthen coordination under the framework of the Asia-Europe Meeting.
- They welcome the positive facets of economic globalisation.
- Both believe that the establishment of an open, fair, equitable, transparent and rule-based multilateral trading system.
- They are determined to strengthen their coordination with developing countries in order to secure shared objectives.
- They recognise the challenge that humankind faces from climate change.
- They strongly condemn the scourge of terrorism in all forms and manifestations.
- They will continuously promote confidence-building measures through steadily enhanced contacts in the field of defence.
- Both remain firmly committed to resolving differences, including the boundary dispute, through peaceful negotiations.
- Both sides also recognise their responsibilities and obligations in the international community.