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U.S. and India Pledge Cooperative Research in Health Issues

WASHINGTON — Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala and Indian Minister of Health and Family Welfare C. P. Thakur signed a joint agreement June 13, pledging cooperative research in HIV/AIDS prevention and maternal and child health research.

“These joint statements on HIV/AIDS prevention and maternal and child health research will help both countries develop new methods and programs that will improve the health of men, women, and children around the world,” Shalala said at the signing ceremony.

“When President Clinton addressed the Indian parliament in March, he spoke about AIDS and promised America’s partnership in the continuing struggle. The work we undertake today is a

further step in meeting that commitment,” she said.

“It is indeed a momentous occasion that the governments of Indian and the United States are coming together in this collaborative venture in the areas of immediate public health concerning our countries,” said Minister Thakur. “I am confident that these agreements will go a long way in strengthening the friendly ties between our governments and the people of both of our countries.”

Over the past 40 years, scientists from both countries have collaborated on basic and applied biomedical and behavioral research. One outstanding program has been the Indo-U.S. Vaccine Action Program, which supports vaccine research. This thirteen-year-old program is serving as the model for cooperation in both

AIDS and maternal and child health areas.

The new agreement commits India and the U.S. to address HIV/AIDS through a disease prevention program. Their plan includes improved surveillance, prevention research, vaccine research and development, technology transfer, and health services research.

Both countries recognize that maternal, neonatal, infant and pediatric mortality and morbidity rates remain unacceptably high. The Indo-U.S. joint effort will focus on nutrition research and the prevention of HIV transmission from mothers to their children.

The participating Indian institutions include the National AIDS Control Organization, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), and other Indian agencies, academic institutions, research facilities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The U.S. participants in the effort are: the National Institutes of Health (NIH), including the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; the National Institute of Mental Health; the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases;

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the National Institute on Drug Abuse; the Fogarty International Center; and other agencies of the U.S. Government, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Under the agreement, both the NIH and ICMR are the primary funders of biomedical research in their respective countries and support a wide variety of relevant researches. The institutions have agreed to convene on a regular basis to consider and facilitate proposals for cooperation. They will also provide technical advice to each other's scientists and government officials.

Specific areas to be addressed within this program include:

- Prevention and treatment of leading causes of maternal, neonatal and pediatric morbidity and mortality (including toxemia, hemorrhage, sepsis, birth asphyxia and trauma, accidents, diarrhea and other infectious diseases, etc.);
- Prevention and treatment of low birth weight and intrauterine growth retardation;
- Maternal and child nutrition and the role of micronutrients in healthy child bearing and pediatric and adolescent health and development;
- Birth defects, genetic disorders and development research;
- Improved understanding of pathophysiology, prevention and treatment of infectious diseases in women and children including childhood asthma, acute respiratory tract infections, gastrointestinal infections, reproductive tract infections and malignancies and HIV/AIDS;
- Reproductive health including socio-behavioral aspects, birth practices and development and evaluation of newer contraceptives;
- Traditional systems of medicine and practices which have an important impact on the health and well-being of women and children adolescents;
- Emergency obstetric care for miscarriages and other problems of pregnancy, including severe preeclampsia, hemorrhage and embolism;
- Relationship between maternal; nutrition, fetal growth/development and degenerative diseases in later life; and
- Analysis, consensus building and policy formulation on public health benefits and cost-effectiveness of new approaches to improve maternal and child health.

National Initiative for Child Protection (NICP)

Mrs. Maneka Gandhi, Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment, launched the National Initiative for Child Protection (NICP) on June 27, 2000 with an aim to spread better and greater understanding of the special needs of children and placing child's rights and protection on the National Agenda. The broad goal of the NICP is to build partnerships with the allied systems like the police system, the health care system, the judicial system and the education system etc.

The NICP is a campaign, which seeks to place child's rights and child protection on the agenda of all the allied systems such as the police, the health care center, and the transport departments and labor departments etc. A greater understanding of the special needs of children in need of care and protection will result in several positive things like greater access to services such as health care, education, justice, etc. for children, development of specialized services for children where they are needed, allocation of resources for children including time, attention, money, infrastructure etc. and an attitudinal change in perceiving the problems of the child and in dealing with them.

To make the NICP successful a national core group has been formed for wider consultation and training of trainers is being organized at the regional level. Preparation of source material is on the way. The States have been asked to lend their support in this gigantic task. Training systems have been evolved for the allied systems like police etc. and child protection issues are being integrated into the curriculum of training institutes. In its first phase, the NICP will be implemented in 14 cities across the country through a network of NGOs.

Visit of INS Mysore

INS Mysore, an Indian Navy guided missile destroyer, participated in the International Naval Review on July 4, 2000 in New York. A ship of the U.S. Navy and 20 other countries participated in this event and was reviewed by the U.S. President Bill Clinton.

INS Mysore earlier made a visit to the Norfolk, VA port between June 27 - 29, 2000 and also took part in the Sail Boston-2000 in Boston on July 11, 2000.

General Purpose Destroyer

- Weight: 6,700 ton
- Propulsion: 4 gas turbines; 64,000 HP
- Top Speed: over 32 Knots
- 16 Surface-to-surface missiles
- Surface-to-air missiles
- 100 mm gun, 4 - 30 mm Gatling guns
- 2 Helicopters, anti-submarine rockets, torpedoes and electronic warfare equipment
- Commanding Officer: Captain Rajiv Dhamdhare
- 500 crew members
- INS Mysore was designed and built at Mazagon Docks, India.

INS Mysore is the second Indian Naval Ship, which has been christened as MYSORE. The old INS Mysore, a Cruiser, began her life in the Royal Navy as HMS Nigeria on 3rd August 1940. During the Second World War she distinguished herself in various theatres of war from the icy waters of the Arctic to the coral reefs of South East Asia. The ship was transferred to the Indian Navy on 29th August 1957. Her advent symbolised power. Her main armament of 6" guns could deliver a fusillade of 2.5 tons of explosives a minute on the enemy. Mysore's first adventure in her chequered career was the liberation of Goa in 1961. Her tasks included the speedy capture of Anjadip, neutralisation and capture of the Portuguese frigate Aphonso de Albuquerque, and subsequent administration of the territory. In 1965 Mysore led the Fleet for two sorties in the North East Arabian Sea and off North Saurashtra, but the enemy did not seek action. It fell once again on Mysore to lead the Western Fleet to victory in December 1971, achieving a most effective blockade of Karachi and virtual command of the Arabian Sea. In her twilight years, Mysore served as the Cadets Training Cruiser, the very cradle of professionalism through which many a future officer passed. Till her decommissioning on 29th August 1985, Mysore constantly lived up to her motto: ALWAYS FEARLESS.

News in Brief

Government announces liberalization of Satellite up linking Policy

Government has announced the much-awaited liberalization of satellite up linking policy allowing all TV channels to uplink from India, irrespective of their equity holding. Information and Broadcasting Minister Arun Jaitley said the new policy would bring a large number of TV channels within the country's broadcasting codes. He said as per the new policy an Indian company, which needs not be a broadcaster, would be permitted to set up linking hub for renting out to broadcasters. Permissible foreign equity in such companies would be limited to 49 per cent, including NRI and Overseas corporate bodies' (OCB) investments, as in the case of telecom sector. The hubs would be permitted to uplink only those TV channels which are permitted by the government, he said, adding companies could uplink through both Indian and foreign satellites, although preference would be given to the former. He said the new policy would also allow up linking facility to Indian news agencies, which are wholly owned by Indians, for news gathering and distribution. Jaitley said this would give the Indian news agencies the much-desired competitive edge over the foreign news agencies.

Joint Ventures mooted in Nuclear Power

Joint ventures in nuclear power sector should be possible within next five years once the required changes are made in the Atomic

Energy Act of 1962 in accordance with the country's economic liberalization policies, according new chief of Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL). Vijay Kumar Chaturvedi, the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of NPCIL tomorrow, although it is difficult to bring changes in the Atomic Energy Act of 1962, a high-level committee is working on it and we anticipate that within next five years the committee's effort will be favorable for joint ventures. Chaturvedi said we do not expect any equity from state governments as the Center's equity share for NPCIL will be completely withdrawn in 2010 and the states are facing financial crunch. Therefore, it is important for NPCIL to look for joint ventures to meet its goal of 20,000 MW by 2020. However, Heavy Water, Nuclear Fuel and Regulatory will be with the Central Government even if a green signal is given for joint ventures, Chaturvedi observed. NPCIL has already appointed consultants to work out strategies for future joint ventures.

Foreign Equity limit for Internet Service providers may be raised

Government is considering a hike foreign equity limit for Internet service providers (ISP) from the current 49 per cent and the issue is likely to be taken up in the next meeting of Telecom Commission scheduled for the first week of August. "There is a proposal to increase the foreign equity limit for Internet Service Providers and this would be discussed in the next meeting of Telecom Com-

mission," Shyamal Ghosh, Secretary of Department of Telecom (DoT), said. Ghosh said that with the foreign equity limit in e-commerce sector pegged at 100 per cent there was a strong case for increasing the FDI in ISP sector. He, however, declined to comment on the quantum of FDI increase being considered by the commission. On the National Long Distance (NLD) norms, Ghosh said that various issues including intra circle traffic and the revenue sharing were being considered. FDI up to 100 per cent would be allowed in e-commerce subject to the condition that the company would divest 26 per cent to the public within five years if it were already listed abroad.

Economy will grow by over seven per cent this year: Sinha

Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha has exuded confidence that the economy would grow over eleven per cent and government would achieve the Rs 100 billion disinvestment target in the current financial year. "I see no reason to deviate from by projection of seven per cent plus growth in the current fiscal," Sinha said. Similarly, there is no reason why the government should not achieve the disinvestment target for the year, he added. Asked about interest rates, he said it would not be surprising if banks raised rates as the stock markets have already factored in such a development following the decision of Reserve Bank of India to hike bank rate and Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR).

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The Coming of Age of India

By Sidharth Bhatia

In India, a million revolutions are taking place every day. Long seen as a closed and insular economy and one that stifled enterprise in order to pursue socialistic goals, India today is posed to leapfrog into the digital era with great élan and in an almost seamless, effortless way, as if to the manner born.

Notwithstanding its rigidity and its slow-growth orientation, the old planned economy pattern had several advantages, not the least of which was to create infrastructural behemoths in the public sector and give India a strong industrial base to stand on. Moreover, during that period, several institutes of academic excellence were set up, which turned out bright engineers and managers by the thousands. Today, India is reaping the benefit of those investments and is gearing up to make a splash in the brave new IT world of tomorrow. The evidence is all around in the country and even outside. The highest number of H1B visas for working in the United States are given to Indians; Silicon Valley, Seattle and other centers of Information Technology development have thousands of Indians working in them; India's own Silicon Plateau, Bangalore, is home to some of the biggest IT companies in the world and thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of bright, creative youngsters are busy setting up dot coms, dreaming of becoming like Bill Gates or Azim Premji, an Indian who is said to be one of the richest men in the world.

India is also a big base for off-shore software development and applications—in Gurgaon, which is just on the outskirts of New Delhi, for example, young Indians process the backroom work for large American corporates and international airlines and credit card companies. Some other statistics: India now has nearly 4 million Internet users—a small number compared to many other countries but one which is increasing exponentially by the minute—and by the end of December 2003, the country is projected to have no less than 100 million Internet users. The numbers look even more impressive when compared to November 1998, when there were less than 200,000 active net users in India. Recent surveys have shown that over 200 Indian cities are wired to the net and an overwhelming number of users are in the 18 to 24 age group though a full quarter of users are in the economically strong 25-39 age band. Interestingly, pure entertainment is among the lowest priorities for most net users, a clear indication that the Indian users want to leverage this powerful medium for education and information purposes. E-commerce in India is still in its infancy, but is growing rapidly and today one can buy everything from books, music, cars and even Indian art on the net. India is emerging as one of the biggest sources of domain name registrations in the world. Employment in the dotcom business is upwards of 80,000 people within

India and this figure is likely to increase by six times in three years or so.

This is of course in addition to the thousands of people employed in programming and software development. Not surprisingly, therefore, many countries are heading to India to source their software and personnel requirements. Germany recently declared that it would woo Indian software engineers with a special employment card, while Singapore, Canada and a host of other countries too have been in the forefront of attracting Indian programmers and entrepreneurs. Indian training institutes are setting up shop all over South Asia, South-East Asia and even Africa, teaching programming skills to youngsters all over the world. However, to maintain these impressive growth rates in the IT industry in general and in Internet usage in particular, huge investments will have to be made in infrastructure. The Indian government has shown pragmatism and a liberal attitude towards this sector, allowing private investment to come in and ensuring that India meets all its commitments in dismantling state-owned monopolies in keeping with WTO requirements.

At present, much of India's Internet backbone is in the hands of the government-owned Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited but by 2001, 80 private Internet service

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Bilateral Meeting of the External Affairs Minister with the U.S. Secretary of State and Participation in the Conference of Democracies

Warsaw, Poland

June 30, 2000

- The bilateral meeting was organized on the margins of the conference of 'Communities of Democracies' (CD). CD is a new initiative organized by a number of countries. India was one of the seven countries of the convening group of CD, which met prior to the conference in order to prepare a draft declaration, which could be released on the conclusion of the conference. CD is not an institutionalized grouping against anybody but a joint initiative taken to exchange views and share experiences on how to strengthen democracy and democratic practices.
- The meeting between External Affairs Minister and U.S. Secretary of State lasted for an hour. During the meeting discussions were held on the modalities of CD.
- The U.S. Secretary of State, Madeline Albright reiterated a very positive assessment of U.S. President's visit to India in March this year. Ms. Albright also reiterated U.S. President's invitation to our Prime Minister for a return visit.
- The return visit by our Prime Minister is expected to take place in September this year. The details are being worked out and would be announced subsequently.
- External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh raised the question of Indian UN peacekeepers in Sierra Leone and our concerns on this issue. Incidentally, the following day External Affairs Minister was to meet UN Secretary General to have discussions on this issue. Ms. Albright expressed her willingness to join him for this meeting and reiterate US concerns. The next day, both the leaders jointly met UN Secretary General.
- As a result of consistent and continuing diplomatic efforts, 21 of the Indian soldiers in relatively more difficult situations have been released. This is a good development. India also appreciates Ms. Albright's decision to join External Affairs Minister for his meeting with UNSG.
- The discussions also took place on bilateral issues including nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. Indian position regarding CTBT has been articulated by PM i.e. "We are preparing a national consensus in this matter and efforts would be continued in the coming months in this direction".
- The two sides also exchanged views on various visits undertaken by the respective sides. External Affairs Minister had recently been to Iran. Accordingly he shared our perceptions on Iran. Ms. Albright had just visited Seoul and Beijing. She shared her experiences in these two places, particularly on the summit meeting between North and South Korea.

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providers and at least 12 private gateways will be fully operational. In addition, the Indian government is also inviting investments in broadband networks as well as in convergence technologies and almost all the major international players have indicated their interest in getting into these cutting edge areas. But while the government has created the necessary legal framework—a cyber law was enacted recently—and has shown a willingness to have liberal investment policies in IT, the real revolution is at the grassroots. Not only are hundreds of thousands of Indians taking to the internet, but NGOs, civil society Organizations, even provincial governments and municipalities are embracing Information technology to improve governance and to enhance social development.

In Tamil Nadu, for example, farmers can find out about weather patterns and the best available prices for their produce via the net, while in Andhra Pradesh, land records have been totally digitized. In Madhya Pradesh, which has pioneered many social development schemes in the rural area, the government plans to put its own policies on the net to ensure greater transparencies. India has set out on the IT path—programming, infrastructure and of course the dotcomming revolution are all part of it—and the goal is clear: the energies that IT will unleash should be for the benefit of every citizen in the country.

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On the crash in stock markets following RBI's measures, Sinha said the market had its own logic why it reacts to a situation in particular fashion. "Stock prices go up in the morning and come down in evening, even though there is no policy decision in the intervening period. The market has its own logic," he said.

Cabinet approves Amendment of Cable Network Act

The Government has given its nod for amendment of the Cable Network Act to provide for adherence by all satellite channels of program and advertisement codes to stop obscenity on television. The amended Act would empower the government to ban rogue channels on the charge of showing obscene programs.

The code was earlier mandatory only for the national channel Doordarshan. The Cabinet also approved the proposal for another amendment to the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act to provide for mandatory distribution of two terrestrial and one regional language channel of Doordarshan by cable operators in a manner so as to retain their quality.

A bill to amend the Cable Act will be introduced in the monsoon session of Parliament, Information and Broadcasting Minister Arun Jaitley informed the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of his ministry. The proposed amendment will provide for an improved enforcement mechanism and the authorized officers to enforce the Act will be designated in it.

India Challenges Basmati Patent in United States patents office

Government has filed a petition before United States Patents and Trademarks Office challenging the grant of patent on basmati rice to Ricetec Inc, Texas, and Supreme Court was informed. "The Government of India has now filed a petition before the USPTO for re-examination of the grant of patent to Ricetec," an affidavit filed by the Center stated. However, it said "even if India succeeds at USPTO, it will not prevent Ricetec from continuing to call its rice strain a 'Basmati-like' or 'Basmati strain'." On the other hand, the Government said regardless of the grant of Patent, Indian farmers could grow Basmati rice without any hindrance on account of Ricetec's patent. Separately, a Technical Committee under the chairmanship of Secretary, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, was also formed to examine the matter from the technical point of view, the Government Said. Explaining the setting up of the Committees, it said the procedure before USPTO is "one-shot" where by all documentary material justifying re-examination must be made available in the first instance.

IT Ministry launches "Operation knowledge" to meet HR demand

To meet the increasing global demand for Indian skilled manpower in the new economy sectors like software and internet, Ministry

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of Information Technology (MIT) has launched a program "Operation Knowledge" to be implemented by June 2001. The Ministry has begun preparing a blueprint on finding out ways and means to meet the demand for Indian Info Tech professionals and a draft would be ready within a month, Minister for Information Technology Pramod Mahajan has said. The draft, which would be referred to the Ministries of Human Resources Development and Finance, would be submitted to the Prime Minister by the end of this year after incorporating inputs from these ministries, he said. According to MIT projections, there would be a demand for 2.2 million skilled manpower in the software sector by 2008, while there would be direct employment opportunities for 1.6 million professionals in the hardware sector.

Additionally, there would be indi-

rect employment opportunities for 3.2 million personnel in the hardware sector by the same period, taking the total global demand for Indian IT professionals to seven million. Mahajan said the operation knowledge would be incorporated in the next Budget providing enough funds for implementation by June 2001.

Government to prepare minimum Agenda for E-Governance

In a bid to push e-governance within the government, the High Powered Committee on Improving Administrative Efficiency using IT would prepare a minimum agenda for e-governance within a month, Cabinet Secretary Prabhakar Kumar said. "The Committee would prepare a transparent, efficient agenda for e-governance including methods to automate government-citizen interface,"

Kumar said. He said the objective of the minimum agenda would be to serve the two-way process of evolving an efficient networking between government departments and bring about transparency in Government functioning. The thrust of the agenda would be to operationalize the IT services within government departments, he said adding the committee would face no hitch from any of the concerned ministries including the ministry of Finance. "If the expenditure of the agenda crosses the earmarked budget, the High Powered Committee would also consider providing additional funds," Kumar said. Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State for Planning and Program Implementation Arun Shourie said to make e-governance a success, the committee should take initiatives to start online transactions so that public could directly deal with various government departments.

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