



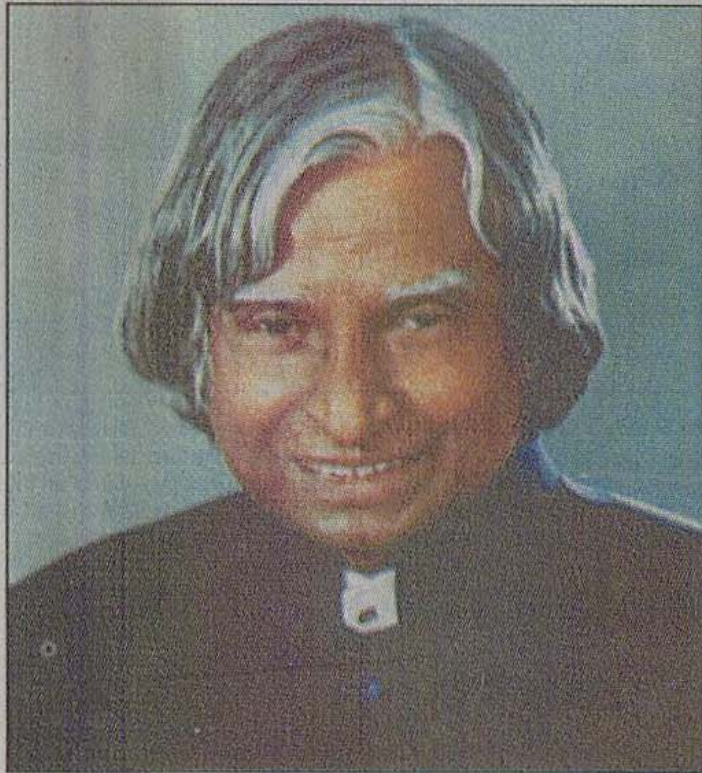
Republic Day of India



The Daily Star

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

JANUARY 26, 2006



APJ Abdul Kalam
President of the Republic of India

India unites poor nations at global trade talks

ARVIND PADMANABHAN

As trade ministers squabbled for six days to draw the work programme to conclude the round of multilateral trade talks in Hong Kong in December, there was one unique outcome for the developing world, spearheaded by India. In a show of strength never witnessed before in World Trade Organisation (WTO) parleys, the entire developing and least developed world came together on a single platform to push their collective agenda forward.

Not surprisingly, trade experts maintain, it was this bond that finally resulted in the 150-member multilateral institution coming up with some concrete results at the end of the ministerial conference. "For the developing world and for the poor countries, the grand alliance which we forged really paid off," said India's Commerce Minister Kamal Nath, who led the country's team at the Hong Kong talks and burnt the midnight oil

day after day to arrive at the deal. "For the first time in the history of WTO, we not only came together and held our ground but also put the development agenda in global trade negotiations," Nath told IANS.

"The big picture is that our farmers are fully protected, industry is happy, our offensive interests in services have been safeguarded - it is a victory for India, victory for the entire developing world," he added.

It was this unity that ultimately resulted in rich nations agreeing to eliminate export subsidies on farm products by 2013 - with the bulk of such reductions in the first five years. And it was doubly welcome since the success came after a string of failures, notably at the ministerial talks in Seattle and Cancun.

WTO talks, till the Hong Kong meeting, had been accustomed to developed nations managing to divide the poor and developing countries by extending preferences

and concessions that they found difficult to refuse.

The grand alliance did not just include the group of 20 developing nations (G20) that have common interests in agriculture and the group of 33 that was formed to protect food and livelihood security. It also included the African-Caribbean-Pacific countries, the least developed countries (LDCs), the Africa Group and the Small Economies that decided to coordinate their efforts better on a joint approach to issues of common interest.

"We represent 85 percent of humanity. We couldn't have allowed the Doha round - which we call the development round - to perpetuate inequalities," Brazilian Foreign Trade Minister Celso Amorim said.

"The developing and poor countries - notwithstanding their size or status - are finding a new, common ground on many issues," said the Zambian Trade Minister of Indian origin, Deepak Patel, the

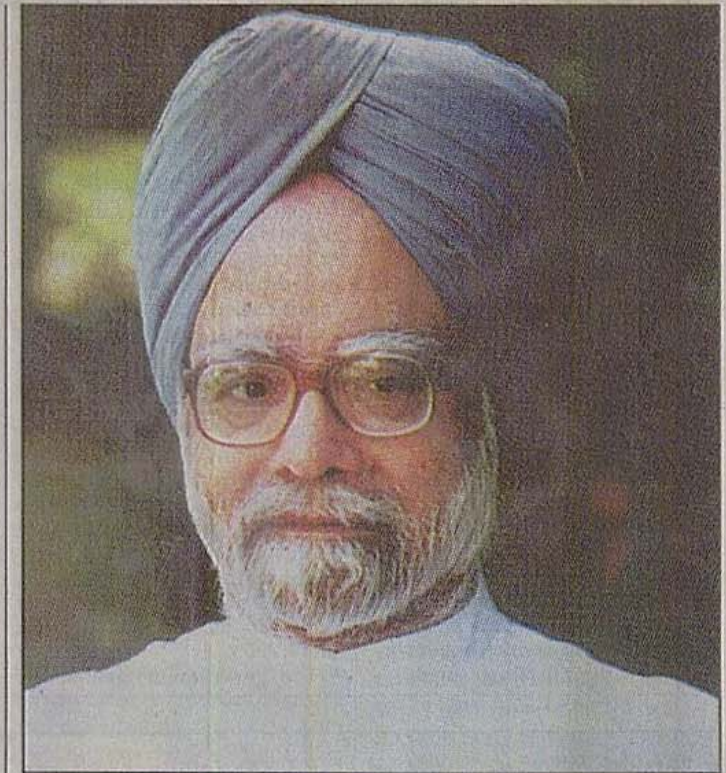
coordinator for poor countries.

The groups, which collectively represent some 110 countries, also took a vow to intensify their dialogue to ensure that the negotiations lead to outcomes that are consistent with the development mandate of the Doha round.

In a joint statement, they said the Doha round must also result in the removal of distortions that inhibit the export growth of developing nations and policy space to ensure sustainable socio-economic development.

"There has been a rebalancing in favour of developing countries, whose interests have now been placed at the heart of our negotiations as we provided for in 2001 when we launched this round," WTO Director-General Pascal Lamys said.

"The convergence of thinking amongst developing and least developed countries has helped in putting the development aspect back on the negotiating table at the



Manmohan Singh
Prime Minister of the Republic of India

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MESSAGE

ON the occasion of the 57th Republic Day of India, I convey my best wishes and warm greetings to the people of Bangladesh and also to all members of the Indian community in Bangladesh. On 26th January 1950, India's Constitution came into effect, which declared India as a sovereign, secular, democratic Republic. India looks back with pride at its achievements in the last five-and-a-half decades and at the same time, recognises that much more remains to be done to ensure eradication of poverty and socio-economic development for all of our 1.1 billion people.

2. The people of Bangladesh and India enjoy a special and unique relationship based on shared history, shared culture and traditions and a shared love for our common language and literature. Through centuries of peaceful interaction between our multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities this relationship has evolved into a shared set of civilizational values, represented by the liberal, democratic and secular societies that the people of our two countries cherish so highly. In 1971 the people of Bangladesh willingly shed their blood to uphold these liberal democratic, secular values and to ensure

the rule of law. India's support for the struggle of the people of Bangladesh in 1971 was an endorsement of these values. 1971 was indeed the defining moment which determined that our two countries and peoples would from then on be friendly neighbours working jointly for mutual prosperity and striving for ever closer understanding.

3. In May 2005 the passing away of Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora, (as GOC of India's Eastern Command, he was the Joint Operational Commander of the Allied Forces in Bangladesh's 1971 Liberation War) brought forth a spontaneous outpouring of public sympathy in Bangladesh, and a tremendous revival of the fellowship and camaraderie between our two peoples that led to success in 1971. In remembering the contribution of Lt. Gen. J.S. Aurora the people of Bangladesh reaffirmed their commitment to the secular, liberal, democratic values. Freedom fighters and MuktiJodhas re-established contact on both sides culminating on 16th December 2005, in the participation of Bangladesh's MuktiJodhas in the Annual Victory Day celebrations of the Indian Army in Kolkata. This event was a grand success, taking place as it did after a gap of three

decades. All participants expressed their keenness to make this an annual feature.

4. As we have seen in our own country, to win freedom is just the first part of the struggle. To preserve and strengthen the common values for which India's Independence Movement and Bangladesh's 1971 Liberation War were fought remains an ongoing, equally arduous and life long struggle. These values can never be taken for granted.

5. Repeatedly, situations arise that threaten the values on the basis of which liberation was attained. The series of bomb blasts that rocked Bangladesh on 17th August, 2005, and the subsequent suicide attacks targeting the judiciary and other democratic institutions constitute one such situation. The leaders of Bangladesh have condemned these blasts as heinous, cowardly and well planned acts of terrorism representing an attack on the independence, sovereignty and democratic values of Bangladesh.

6. The Government of India has expressed its serious concern and strong condemnation of the events of 17th August, 2005, as terrorism directed against the friendly people of Bangladesh. We have urged the Government of Bangladesh to identify the perpetrators of these



Veena Sikri

terrorist acts. We have offered any kind of assistance as may be required for this. The Government of India has strongly rejected as unfounded and irresponsible the allegations made at senior levels about Indian involvement in these events.

7. Terrorism and fundamentalism pose the most serious challenge to democratic and open societies. Unless these are tackled urgently, they can undermine the very basis of a country's political and economic existence. India is willing to assist Bangladesh in every possible way, whether it is through capacity building, or sharing of information and experiences in tackling and overcoming these problems. As our Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has said, "we must fight terrorism wherever it exists, because terrorism anywhere threatens democracy everywhere".

8. The greatest bulwark against terrorism is to strengthen the institutions of democracy itself including an active and independent judiciary, vibrantly free media, a neutral and independent Election Commission to ensure free and fair elections together with an apolitical bureaucracy and a strong legislature. India has shared her experience in holding free and fair elections with many friendly developing countries. We have done this through the UN, through the Commonwealth Secretariat and directly on a bilateral basis. Should there be the interest and the request we would be more than happy to do the same and share our experiences with Bangladesh.

9. We firmly believe, as India's External Affairs Minister, speaking in Dhaka in August, 2005, said, that "a stable, prosperous, secular and democratic Bangladesh is not just in the interest of its people but clearly in the interest of India and the region as a whole".

10. During the year gone by, the impetus for regional cooperation within South Asia has been considerably strengthened. The successful 13th SAARC Summit in Dhaka in November 2005 led to important initiatives like expansion of membership to include Afghanistan and grant of Observer Status for Japan and China. SAARC countries signed 3 significant Agreements which will greatly facilitate the implementation of SAFTA. A roadmap for broader cooperation in SAARC to alleviate poverty, build infrastructure, tackle social challenges, overcome natural disasters and focus on human resources development has been agreed to.

11. Cooperation among the countries of the BIMSTEC region was further strengthened with the 8th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held in Dhaka in December 2005.

12. As SAARC enters the third decade of its existence and BIMSTEC comes close to completing one decade, implementation of agreed proposals becomes critical in making SAARC and BIMSTEC effective forums for regional development and cooperation.

13. Bangladesh is currently the Chair of both SAARC and BIMSTEC. India is the incoming Chair for both SAARC and BIMSTEC. This has provided Bangladesh and India a unique opportunity for cooperation and coordination with each other in the realization and implementation of SAARC and BIMSTEC proposals for the betterment of the peoples of South and South East Asia. If this cooperation can be successfully developed it will no doubt add a strong dimension to our bilateral relationship.

14. In this context we look forward to the forthcoming visit to India in March 2006 by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of

Bangladesh, Begum Khaleda Zia.

15. Our Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, in his address to the 13th SAARC Summit in Dhaka had analysed that "regional economic cooperation in South Asia has fallen far short of our expectations", adding that "if SAARC as a region is to recapture its role as a crossroads of culture and commerce, it is necessary for us to remove the barriers to the free flow of goods, of peoples and ideas within our own region. We cannot be the crossroads of Asia but remain disconnected within our own region".

16. Dr. Manmohan Singh emphasized that "if we wish the next twenty years of SAARC to be

different, we should take the first decision to reconnect the countries of the subcontinent on the one hand and then reconnect the sub-continent to the larger Asian neighbourhood on the other. In pursuit of this vision, let us agree, at this Summit, that all South Asian countries would provide to each other, reciprocally, transit facilities to third countries, not only connecting one another, but also connecting to the larger Asian neighbourhood, in the Gulf, Central Asia and the South-East Asia. India, which borders each of the members of the South Asia, is willing to do so".

17. Greater connectivity among the countries of the sub-continent is vital for prosperity and well being

of the people of this region. The Government of India has time and again proposed better connectivity between Bangladesh and neighbouring Indian states by road, rail and river routes. The New Mooring Terminal being built at Chittagong can serve a very useful role in development of the region if neighbouring Indian States are allowed to make use of it. The Akhaura-Agartala railway link can play a very important and useful role in movement of goods from and to the Chittagong Port. The Government of India is willing to assist the Government of Bangladesh in establishing this and other important rail and road links.

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Our
heartiest felicitations
on the occasion of the
Republic Day of India



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Heartiest felicitations to the Government of India

on the occasion of the 57th Republic Day





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