

International

What's next after the START?

US, USSR each retain 1,600 strategic carriers with 6,000 warheads

UNDATED, Aug 1 : US President Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev signed a treaty to shrink their countries' arsenals of long-range nuclear weapons. The pact marked the first time the superpowers had agreed to reduce the number of transcontinental nuclear weapons. If ratified by the Senate and the Supreme Soviet, the treaty would reduce these stockpiles by 30 per cent. Bush and Gorbachev signed the START pact with pens made of metal from US and Soviet missiles destroyed as part of the 1987 treaty cutting intermediate-range weapons, reports AP.

Presidents Bush and Gorbachev also announced on Wednesday they intend to convene a Middle East peace conference in October to launch face-to-face negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

Political unrest, never far from the surface, erupted as armed attackers killed seven Lithuanian guards and wounded two others at a border post run by the secessionist Lithuanian government. A barracks was also blown up in Lithuania and in a third incident an explosion aboard a passenger train from Moscow to the Azerbaijani capital of Baku killed 15 people, railway and police officials said.

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does not limit the qualitative arms race. On the one hand, the two sides had been obviously striving to scale down military confrontation, but on the other, they did their best to retain a considerable part of their weapons modernisation programmes, which had been drafted in the past.

While the START talks dragged on in Geneva for ten years in a row, the US and the USSR kept modernising strategic weapons systems. In the meantime, those systems

to be slashed under the treaty were becoming obsolete.

Third, the Soviet side has failed to include a highly important provision linking strategic offensive arms and ABM defence (i.e. the START treaty and the 1972 ABM treaty) into the START treaty. The Soviet side had only made a unilateral statement at the Geneva talks to the effect that any violation of the ABM treaty might be regarded as a pretext for withdrawing from the START treaty.

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MOSCOW, Aug 1 : The START treaty, signed in the Kremlin on July 31, is not the final destination but just an intermediate station along the thorny path of disarmament. Such is the Soviet approach to arms-control talks that had been conducted in Moscow by Presidents Gorbachev and Bush and the heads of the two nations' foreign-policy agencies, reports IAN.

Why is it important to ensure the uninterrupted nature of the arms limitation process? Despite its historic significance, the START treaty has at least three drawbacks.

First of all, it would be an impermissible luxury for each side to retain 1,600 strategic carriers replete with 6,000 warheads after a seven-year period, all the more so as at present conventional weapons are being slashed drastically. At any rate, the United States has always said that nuclear arsenals should be used to deter the conventional threat.

Heaps of nuclear weaponry that are still wielded by the Soviet Union and the United States obviously contradict the new relations of partnership, which have been formalized by Gorbachev and Bush at their current summit in Moscow.

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As before, Moscow keeps regarding the ABM treaty as the cornerstone of the entire disarmament process and calls for strengthening it. The Soviet side hopes that Washington, which in fact had previously suggested that the ABM treaty be replaced altogether, would alter its position.

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stability.

During their Washington summit that took place in the summer of 1990, the Soviet and American leaders reflected their commitment to that goal in a special statement. And now both Gorbachev and Bush are doing their best to adopt specific measures for accomplishing that goal.

Military programmes, which are expected to last for at least ten years, should not be implemented to the detriment of the two sides' socio-economic interests. Besides, they should not affect the process of strengthening mutual confidence and partnership.

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