

India' and 'the changing demographics of the Canadian population'. Martin said 'how we react to these forces will determine the contours of the Canadian future; and these forces call for immediate and sustained action.'

In regard to rise of China and India, Martin suggested

'Looking to the international demographic context,' Martin said 'the developed world will (now) be facing the same demographic challenges as our own' which includes 'increasingly fierce competition for skills.'

Canada, said the Prime Minister, needs more immigrants and needs them to succeed as well. 'Too often, today's new

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India at forefront of global affairs, asserts Natwar Singh

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AJIT JAIN
in Toronto

'Why India Matters' was the topic of External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh's talk September 27 delivered to a gathering of foreign policy experts at McGill University in Montreal, organized jointly by MU and the Canadian Institute of International Affairs.

Singh said that 'it is no longer possible (for the world) to ignore India's voice; without her, no calculus of the 21st century would be either complete or viable.'

The three-day official visit Sep 25 through Sep 27 was Singh's first to Canada, for meetings with the Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Pierre Pettigrew to discuss India-Canada relations in the nuclear field and other areas of mutual interest. He also called on Prime Minister Paul Martin in Ottawa. Pettigrew also hosted a dinner in honor of Singh in Montreal on Sep 26 where about 200 people were invited.

Singh's 20-minute speech at MU covered India's history, its economic development from Nehru's time to Indira Gandhi and Rajeev Gandhi, the role that IITs are playing in producing IT graduates, India's steady economic growth of 7-8 percent and poverty reduction. He also mentioned the Air India *Kanishka* tragedy and the need for closure for the victims' families.

During the last 20 years, Singh said, 'India stood up to relentless terrorism, stoked and supplied from across our borders, which has claimed more than 80,000 civilian lives, an achievement of which we can be pardonably proud.'

In this respect, Indian Minister said 'the West woke up to terrorism only after 9/11 even though this very country knows well the *Kanishka* aircraft bombing of June 1985.'

After detailing India's relations with the US, China and other Asian countries, Singh discussed India's nuclear program and the newfound understanding on this controversial subject with Canada, which, sources say, was the main objective of his official visit to Canada.

After the Singh-Pettigrew meeting in Ottawa Sept 26, Pettigrew said Canada has agreed to 'allow the supply of nuclear-related dual-use items to Indian civilian nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, in accordance with the requirements of the Nuclear Suppliers Group's dual-use guidelines.'

The two ministers also agreed 'to pursue opportunities for the development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy both bilaterally and through the appropriate internation-



■ (From left) Heather Munroe-Blum, Principal, McGill University, Prof. T.V. Paul of the Department of Political Science, McGill University, India's External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh, Toby Gilsig, President of the Canadian Institute for International Studies

al forums, consistent with their international commitments.'

Prof. T V Paul of the Department of Political Science of McGill University chaired Singh's talk.

In a telephone interview with *India Abroad*, Paul said he told the invited guests that "India is going through major transition in the international system today. What's important is China and India are becoming two great powers and it is happening without violence. So, this is a great opportunity and challenge for India. It is not easy to get integrated fast but India is doing well. It is getting integrated and Indian diplomats have to be working on their strategy, how to engage, how to strategise, how to become leading power of the world."

He pointed out that the international environment today is very conducive to India in that sense, but warned that it may not be permanent if there is conflict with China. 'Politics never stays stagnant, you have dynamic situation in Taiwan, China and this situation could get verse.'

Singh told the foreign policy experts at McGill that India's 'record as a democracy, the growing size of economy, the size of our population, and the contributions that we have made to global causes make a powerful case for our candidature to the permanent membership of the UN Security Council.'

There was no indication given by either side whether that issue was discussed or whether Canada would support India's claim.

Talking about India-Canada ties, Singh said 'our relations have been impeded to some degree by differences on nuclear policy

and by the activities of those of your citizens espousing violence against the Republic of India,' in an obvious reference to the few remaining fundamentalist Sikhs in Canada.

'I have conveyed a widely held view in India that 20 years after the (Air India tragedy) ... it is time that the worst terrorist incident in civil aviation history - the bombing of an Air India aircraft - is brought to closure. We expect Canada to do justice in this matter and handle a difficult issue with the transparency that it deserves.'

Singh also said that India is an 'intuitive internationalist' and that as the country integrates with global society, that trait would be further strengthened.

'It's outlook is not wholly rooted in the past; it matters because its identity is not defined vis-a-vis that of others and because its nationalism reflects the idealism advocated and practiced by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru,' Singh said of India's role in international affairs.'

He said India's 'capabilities have grown, so too has our sense of responsibility. On key global issues - strengthening democratic capacities, combating terrorism, preventing WMD proliferation, responding to natural disasters, or addressing health challenges - India is in the forefront of international efforts.'

Present during Singh's talk were Shashi U Tripathi, Secretary (West), and S. Jaishankar, Joint Secretary (Americas), from India's Ministry of External Affairs and who accompanied Singh on his visit. Also present was Indian High Commissioner Shyamala B Cowsik, and Deputy High Commissioner Niraj Srivastava.