

SA lends India N-hand

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Prime Minister Manmohan Singh inspects a guard of honour during the ceremonial welcome at the President's Lounge in Pretoria, South Africa, on Monday.

Pretoria gets New Delhi's support for Security Council seat

Chaitanya Kalbag
Pretoria, October 2

THE LEADERS of India and South Africa made a strategic trade-off on Monday. India decisively said it would support South Africa's bid to occupy a permanent African seat in a reformed United Nations Security Council, and Pretoria in turn said it would support New Delhi's ambitions on civilian nuclear technology. The two sides also agreed to step up co-operation on fighting terrorism.

Prime Minister Manmohan

Singh and South African President Thabo Mbeki signed the Tshwane Declaration, which commits the two countries to a deeper and strategic relationship, and then addressed a joint news conference. Tshwane is the new but not widely known name for Pretoria, South Africa's capital.

Asked if India was supportive of South Africa's aspiration to be a permanent member of the Security Council, Singh answered unequivocally: "Yes, very much. South Africa, by virtue of its standing, by virtue of its role in Africa

and in the international system, is eminently entitled to that place."

On civilian nuclear cooperation, Singh said the two sides discussed cooperation in nuclear power. He said he explained the agreement India had reached with the United States, which is now being debated in the US Congress.

He said once it was passed by the US Congress it would go before the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). "South Africa is a member of the NSG and I expect and hope that when that matter reaches the NSG, South Africa will take a sym-

pathetic view of India's concerns."

The nuclear rapprochement is particularly significant, and Indian officials pronounced themselves pleased at the outcome of the 50-minute talks between the two leaders and their closest aides.

South Africa is the first nation to voluntarily give up its nuclear-weapons programme. It had six bombs when the then president F.W. de Klerk admitted the existence of the arsenal in 1993. Pretoria then acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

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