

# India for early op of TAPI gasline project

## India, Turkmenistan Ink 7 Pacts, Vow To Fight Terror

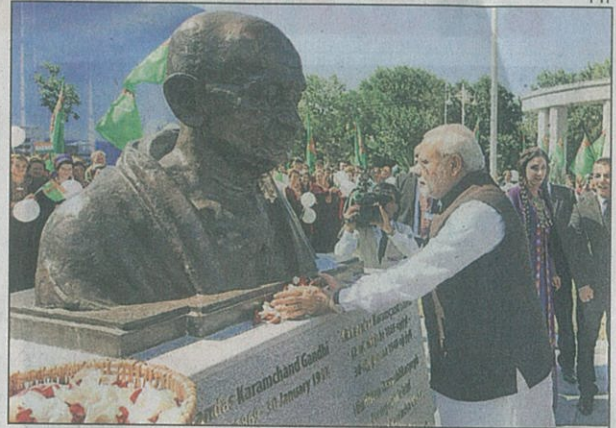
**Ashgabat:** Batting for early implementation of the USD 10 billion TAPI gas pipeline project, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday evinced India's interest in long-term investment in the energy sector in Turkmenistan as the two countries inked seven pacts and vowed to jointly combat terrorism in the region.

During comprehensive talks between Modi and Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov both sides decided to intensify efforts in dealing with threats of terrorism, organised crime and illegal drug-trafficking.

The Prime Minister identified terrorism as a major threat facing the region and said, "We have shared interest in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan and Central Asia. We have also common purpose in combating terrorism and extremism in our region."

After talks between the two sides, a total of seven pacts were signed including an agreement on cooperation in the field of defence and another on tourism.

Calling TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) project as a significant initiative in relationship be-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveils a bust of Mahatma Gandhi in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on Saturday

tween the two countries, Modi said possibility of land-sea route through Iran for the pipeline should be explored.

The project was envisaged to take gas from Turkmenistan, which holds the world's fourth-largest natural gas reserves, to India and Pakistan through Afghanistan.

A joint statement termed the TAPI project a "key pillar" of economic engagement between India and Turkmenistan and said both the leaders recognised that its implementation would have a transformational impact on trade.

It said they decided to take

measures for early implementation of this important regional project.

The leaders reaffirmed their strong commitment towards timely implementation of this strategic project and noted that the selection of its Consortium Leader, to be finalised by September 1 this year, would mark a crucial step, it said.

Modi said also expressed India's readiness for long-term investment in the energy sector in Turkmenistan. "I convey our interest in long-term investment in the energy sector in Turkmenistan," the Prime Minister said. ■