



PHOTO: AFP  
Sri Lanka Constitutional Affairs Minister and chief peace negotiator G.L. Peiris (L) greets his counterpart of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Anton Balasingham (R) and Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgesen (C) during press conference of the fourth round of peace talks at Rose Garden resort in Nakhon Pathom province 32 km west of the Thai capital Bangkok on Thursday. The peace talks with the LTTE is aimed at ending three decades of ethnic bloodshed.

# Giving up arms to be suicidal, says LTTE

## Lankan peace talks end without accord

AFP, Nakhon Pathom

Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels, known for their trademark suicide bombing squads, said Thursday it would be "suicidal" to consider laying down their weapons during ongoing peace talks.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said at the close of four days of negotiations here that moves to decommission weapons can only be taken up after a final settlement to the conflict that has claimed over 60,000 lives.

"The military strength of the LTTE is the bargaining power of our people. It is an instrument of security for our people. It is suicidal on our part to give it up at this stage," said their chief negotiator Anton Balasingham.

But he said there was no need for the group to "resort to violence" as they remained engaged in the Norwegian-backed peace talks under way since last September and continued to observe a bilateral truce in force for a year.

The decommissioning of rebel arms figured high during the latest round of peace talks which concluded here Thursday with progress on

humanitarian issues, but disagreement on military matters.

Balasingham's comments came a day after the top Sri Lankan government negotiator, G.L. Peiris, said they considered the laying down of arms important, but that the timing of the move was critical.

"Decommissioning is certainly necessary, but at the appropriate time. It has to be accompanied by a political settlement and we are nowhere near that," he said.

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga on Wednesday called on the LTTE to show its sincerity by disbanding their elite suicide squad known as the Black Tigers who had kept fear alive in the island with spectacular strikes.

Kumaratunga is in an uneasy cohabitation government run by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. The president and the prime minister are at serious odds over the handling of the peace process.

The Tigers have lost more than 17,500 of their fighters, including some 241 suicide bombers,

over the past two decades.

The first Tiger suicide bomber was a rebel known as Captain Miller who blasted a military camp at Nellyyadi in the Jaffna peninsula on July 5, 1987 with a truck packed with explosives.

Since then, the Black Tigers have claimed high-profile victims including former Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 and Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993.

Earlier report says, Sri Lanka's warring parties ended their latest round of talks here on Thursday without an agreement on key military issues, but with a breakthrough on foreign funding to propel their peace bid.

Over four days of Norwegian-brokered talks, LTTE and the Sri Lankan government stressed they will not return to war, although they could not secure consensus on a key aspect of the peace bid, winding back military operations.

Sri Lanka's chief negotiator G.L. Peiris said the two parties have agreed to appoint the World Bank as the custodian of millions of dollars in foreign money expected to pour in to help revive the war-battered nation.

## Pakistan denies Abdul Qadeer Khan offered nuke tech to others

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan on Wednesday dismissed as absolutely false a US media report that the inventor of its atom bomb, Abdul Qadeer Khan, had offered nuclear technology to other countries.

"Such reports were part of a malicious campaign against Pakistan's consistent and established record of safeguarding its sensitive nuclear technology and ensuring without doubt that this technology has not been given, by any organisation or individual, to any other country," the foreign ministry said.

The Los Angeles Times in a report on Sunday claimed Khan was the only scientist known to be linked to the alleged nuclear efforts of North Korea, Iraq and Iran.

"If one man sits at the nuclear fulcrum of the three countries President George W. Bush calls the 'axis of evil' it may well be Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan," said the report, carried by a local daily newspaper on Wednesday.

The foreign ministry spokesman said the report was "absolutely false, baseless and motivated."

## Indo-Pak troops trade fire: 3 killed

AFP, Srinagar

Suspected Islamic militants killed two Muslims in restive Kashmir while Indian and Pakistani troops exchanged heavy artillery fire overnight in which one aid worker got killed in Pakistan occupied Kashmir, police sources said Thursday.

Suspected militants killed Abdul Rashid Khan by slitting his throat in the village of Sumbhar, near the northern township of Bandipora, 60 kilometres (38 miles) north of the summer capital Srinagar.

Police said Khan was working as a labourer with the Indian army and militants suspected him of passing information to the military.

In the neighbouring village of Aham Sharief, suspected rebels shot dead another Muslim, Manzoor Ahmed.

"The motive behind the killing is being investigated," a police officer told AFP.

Two Indian army soldiers in a vehicle on patrol were also injured in a mine explosion triggered by Muslim militants in the southern district of Pulwama Thursday, police said.

Meanwhile, Indian and Pakistani troops exchanged artillery fire over the Line of Control (LoC) — the defacto border dividing the disputed region between them — late Wednesday in the northern sector of Keran.

Police said Muslim resident Nissar Joo was injured in the Nangamandi village in Keran when his house received a direct hit.

Indian troops returned the fire and the exchange of fire continued for several hours," a police officer said.

India and Pakistan frequently exchange fire along the 742-kilometre (460 mile) long LoC.

The nuclear rivals have fought two of their three wars over the Himalayan region.

Another report from Muzaffarabad says, a local worker of a London-based Islamic aid group was killed and his driver injured by shelling in the Pakistani-administered part of Kashmir, police said Thursday.

Zulfikar Ali, 40, who worked for the Islamic Relief organisation died when his vehicle was hit during overnight shelling near the Line of Control (LoC) dividing Kashmir, senior police officer Raja Ghulam Sarwar told AFP.

The aid worker was hit near Lala village, 80 kilometres (50 miles) northeast of here, as he travelled to Athmugam in the Neelum valley. The valley straddles the LoC and its main road remains closed to traffic because it lies in the range of India's small arms fire.

However, some drivers take the risk of using it in the dark, with headlights off. Sarwar said the aid worker, a local resident, died on the spot. Islamic Relief has been engaged in projects aimed at boosting local economic activities, officials said.

Tension remains high between Indian and Pakistani troops stationed in Kashmir state, which is claimed by both countries and has been the cause of two of their three wars since 1947.

India accuses Pakistan of fomenting a separatist movement in Kashmir, which has claimed more than 36,000 lives since 1989.

Pakistan denies the charge and says it only extends political, moral and diplomatic support to the Kashmiris' legitimate struggle."

## Pakistan nabs 2 Taliban men after gunbattle

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistani police arrested at least two foreign militants in Karachi after a grenade and gun battle Thursday, but officials said it was too early to say if the militants were members of the shadowy al Qaeda group.

The men had been hiding in a house on the outskirts of Karachi, police officials said.

"They threw four hand grenades at the police, out of which three exploded," senior interior ministry official Brigadier Javed Cheema told Reuters. "Luckily, there were no casualties."

Cheema said two men were arrested, both of them foreigners, but he declined to give details about their nationality, saying investigations were being carried out.

He said it was too early to establish any link with the al Qaeda network of Saudi-born militant Osama bin Laden.

Witnesses said they saw police arresting at least four men, but one managed to flee despite a bullet wound.

## India tests Agni missile, boosts nuclear security

### Islamabad terms test part of 'war-mongering'

REUTERS, New Delhi

India Thursday test fired a shorter-range version of its nuclear-capable Agni missile, capable of striking almost anywhere in Pakistan, that analysts said would boost its defences against its nuclear-armed neighbour.

The test at a remote site in eastern Orissa state over the Bay of Bengal "was a textbook launch, everything went perfectly," said Uday Bhaskar, deputy head of the government-funded Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses.

Earlier this week, Fernandes said India would destroy Pakistan in any reprisal against a Pakistani nuclear attack.

His statement came after Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf said the threat of a "non-conventional war" helped avert a conflict between the two neighbours last year over Kashmir.

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The surface-to-surface Agni model, which can carry a nuclear warhead, is the backbone of India's efforts to build a credible self-defence strategy against nuclear-armed Pakistan and China. Agni-1 has a one-ton payload capacity and can be fired from rail and road launchers, making it highly mobile.

"The test is one more step in enhancing India's overall weapons of mass destruction capability," said Uday Bhaskar, deputy head of the government-funded Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses.

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## India tests nuclear missile

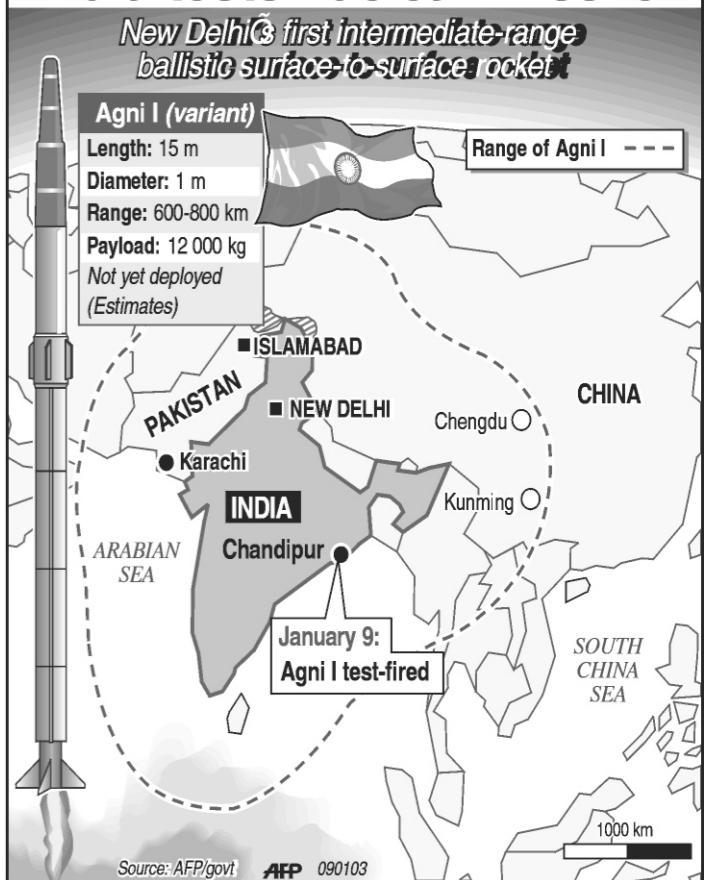


PHOTO: AFP  
South African freedom fighter Fatima Mir (R, sitting) is awarded for her achievements by Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on the first day of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (Overseas Indian Conference) in New Delhi on Thursday. The three-day conference which is bringing together for the first time eminent personalities of Indian origin from all around the world is aimed at promoting closer ties between the Indian government and the vast Indian diaspora.

## Certain NRIs can get dual citizenship: PM

AFP, New Delhi

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee Thursday kicked off the first ever Overseas India Day with a long-awaited announcement that certain Indians living abroad would be allowed to hold dual citizenship.

Vajpayee said the event was a "homecoming" for the 1,500 prominent politicians, businessmen and professionals who travelled to New Delhi for the three-day Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (Overseas Indian Day).

The Indian diaspora is huge, with 20 million People of India Origin (PIOs) or Non Resident Indians (NRIs) in 110 countries and more than a million in 11 countries.

"My government has decided to accept the recommendation... to permit dual citizenship for people of Indian origin living in certain countries," he said to loud applause.

"We will introduce the necessary legislation during the budget (next) session of parliament."

Dual citizenship has been a long-

pending demand by People of India Origin (PIOs) and Non Resident Indians, or NRIs as they are known.

Vajpayee did not give details, but Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani has said previously that the granting of dual citizenship would not be automatic and would be confined to nationals of a few countries which have a similar provision for dual nationalities.

Vajpayee said Indians living abroad shared a common identity in their "Indianness."

"Therefore, this great gathering, which is the first of its kind, is truly a homecoming," he said.

"Many of you -- or your forefathers -- left India in search of fortune or a better livelihood. Today India has itself become a land of opportunity."

"We want to share with our extended family our achievement, hopes, concerns, aspirations and goals."

Vajpayee said he had always been conscious of the need for India to be sensitive to the hopes and concerns of its vast diaspora.

## US asks Pakistan to strip UN envoy of diplomatic immunity

AFP, New York

The United States has asked Pakistan to waive the diplomatic immunity of its envoy to the United Nations so authorities in New York can prosecute him on domestic violence charges, the State Department said Wednesday.

"We have asked them to waive his immunity," spokesman Richard Boucher said, declining to comment further on the matter except to say that it had been raised by US diplomats in Washington, New York and Islamabad.

The case could have potentially embarrassing diplomatic ramifications, as Pakistan is a key US ally in the war on terrorism and this month took up a seat on the UN Security Council, which is likely to soon consider whether to authorise military action against Iraq.

Boucher would not say whether Pakistan had responded to the request, although the Washington Post reported earlier that Islamabad had thus far refused to do so.

## Naga leaders set for peace talks in Delhi

AFP, New Delhi

Two exiled separatist leaders of a rebel group in the restive northeastern Indian state of Nagaland were due to hold peace talks in the Indian capital Thursday to end one of India's longest-running ethnic rebellions, officials said.

Guerrilla leaders of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), Isak Chishi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah, arrived in New Delhi overnight from Amsterdam.

At least 200 Naga supporters, dressed in traditional headgear and wielding spears and machetes, welcomed the NSCN leaders at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi singing "We shall overcome."

"We have come here to meet the Indian leadership and the people of India for continuing the peace talks successfully," the 72-year-old NSCN chairman Swu told journalists on his arrival.

The NSCN, fighting for an independent homeland for the Naga tribes, has been holding peace talks with the government since a ceasefire was struck in 1997.

But it is the first time in 37 years that the NSCN will hold peace talks on Indian soil.

Talks between the NSCN and the government emissary have previously been held in several Asian cities with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee meeting the rebel leadership in 2001 in the Japanese city of Osaka.

On Thursday, the two NSCN leaders were due to visit Raighat, a memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, the leading figure in India's freedom struggle.

Later in the day they will hold talks with New Delhi's chief peace negotiator, K. Padmanabhaiah.

In the evening, Swu and Muivah are expected to meet Vajpayee.

## Pak army takes control of nuclear-capable missile

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's army has taken possession of a nuclear-capable ballistic missile, a spokesman said Thursday, a first in the history of the country's nuclear program.

The intermediate-range surface-to-surface Hatf-V missile, known as Ghauri, was presented to President Pervez Musharraf in his capacity as army chief during a formal ceremony at a nuclear research plant on the outskirts of Islamabad on Wednesday.

General Musharraf said it was "a proud day for him to be accepting the Ghauri system on behalf of the Army's Strategic Force Command," military spokesman Major General Rashid Qureshi quoted him as saying.

The Ghauri's induction into the army "would radiate the necessary effects of deterrence," Musharraf said.

With a range of up to 1,500 kilometers (930 miles), the missile is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead deep into Indian territory.

It was handed over by the directors of A.Q. Khan Research Laboratory (KRL), named after Abdul Qadeer Khan, the scientist who developed Pakistan's first nuclear weapon.

"It is the first time a nuclear-capable ballistic missile has been inducted into the army," political observer Mohammad Afzal Niazi told AFP.

The Ghauri was first tested in April 1998, one month before Pakistan and India conducted tit-for-tat underground nuclear tests. It was test-fired again in April 1999 and as tensions between Pakistan and India peaked in May last year.

The missile is named after a Muslim warrior who defeated Indian ruler Prithvi Chauhan in the late 12th

century.

The induction ceremony, closed to the media, was attended by top generals, nuclear scientists and engineers. The Ghauri, painted in camouflage khaki and grey colours, was wheeled out of a workshop mounted on a truck and driven past Musharraf and other top brass, military-issued photographs showed.

The KRL laboratory is involved in enrichment of weapons-grade uranium, used to build nuclear weapons, and missile development.

The Dawn newspaper on Wednesday reported that US officials believe Khan initiated contact with North Korea in 1992 to obtain a dozen medium-range Nodong ballistic missiles. Observers say the Ghauri is based on the Nodong.

## Delhi suspends passport of Kashmir leader

AFP, New Delhi

A senior Kashmiri separatist leader said Thursday the Indian government had suspended his passport ahead of a visit to the United States.

"I have got a notice of suspension of my passport for four weeks," said Umar Farooq, Kashmir's leading Muslim cleric and founder of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), the main separatist alliance.

"I was due to travel to the United States for a family visit. The notice says that my travel is against the integrity and sovereignty of India. This is malicious and they are trying to malign the APHC and its credibility among the people," he told AFP.

Farooq, whose wife's family lives in the United States, said a meeting of the APHC was being called to discuss the issue.

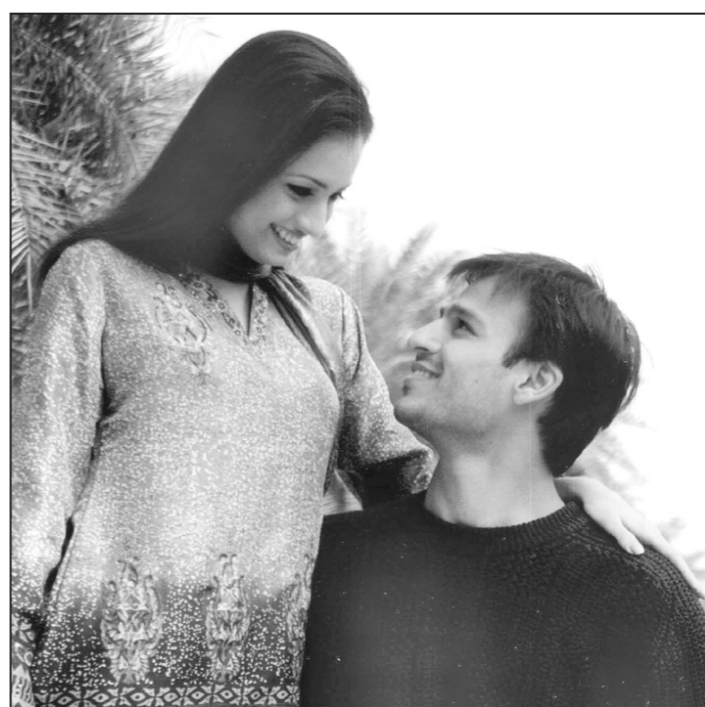


PHOTO: AFP  
Bollywood Actress and Miss Asia Pacific 2000 Diya Mirza and Actor Vivek Oberoi strike a pose for photographers during a photocall in Lucknow on Thursday. The couple are promoting their new film "Dum" ("Force").

## Russia helped India's nuke programme: CIA

PTI, Washington

Russia has significantly supported in developing India's nuclear programmes with technology and equipment, and become a main source of arms for the country, the CIA has said.

Besides, it has been helping China and Iran among others with infrastructure for nuclear projects, ballistic missile-related goods, training on biological and chemical weapons and defence-related exports, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) says in its semi-annual report.

Russia's cash-strapped defence, biotechnology, chemical, aerospace and nuclear industries, are eager to raise funds via exports and transfers, the CIA says.

In addition, some Russian universities and scientific institutes have shown a willingness to earn much-needed funds by providing weapons of mass destruction or

missile-related teaching and training for foreign students.

President Putin in May 2000 amended the presidential decree on nuclear exports to allow Russia to export nuclear materials, technology and equipment to countries that do not have full-scope IAEA safeguards. And it supplied India, that do not have full-scale safeguards, with material for its civilian (nuclear) programme in 2001," it says.

Russia also continues to be the main supplier of technology and equipment to India's and China's naval nuclear propulsion programmes and has played a key role in supporting civilian nuclear programmes in Iran, primarily the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant project, it says.