



PHOTO: AFP

Malaysian Prime Minister and President of ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) Mahathir Mohamad walks past women members during the opening ceremony of the UMNO general assembly in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday. Mahathir warned in his opening speech that power struggles after his departure in October could see the ruling party ousted in future elections.

## Mahathir slams West for war mongering

### 'Infighting could see UMNO ousted'

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad launched a vitriolic attack on the European race Thursday, accusing them of warmongering, indiscriminate attacks on Muslims, greed and sexual deviancy.

Europeans, including "those who migrated and set up new nations in America, Australia and New Zealand", wanted "to control the world again", he said.

Predicting that he would be condemned as a "racist", the veteran Southeast Asian leader said he was "not anti-European. I have many friends and acquaintances who are Europeans."

"They are very clever, brave and have an insatiable curiosity," he said.

But "unfortunately they are also very greedy and like to take forcibly the territories and rights of other people."

In an obvious reference to the recent war on Iraq he said "they have demonstrated that they are ready to invent false allegations in order to go to war to kill children, old

people, sick people", considering them "mere collaterals" who cannot stand in the way of their objectives.

Mahathir was speaking at the annual congress of his ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) for the last time before retiring in October after 22 years in power.

The leader of a moderate Muslim government, Mahathir said the September 11 2001 terrorist attack on the United States was "an excuse for the Anglo Saxon Europeans to return to their old violent ways."

"Their strategy to fight terrorism is through attacking Muslim countries and Muslims, whether they are guilty or not."

Just over a year ago Mahathir was invited to the White House to be thanked personally by President George W. Bush for his support in the war on terrorism, but his strong opposition to the war in Iraq has seen relations sour.

Mahathir said Europeans also wanted to impose their cultural values on the world, including "unlimited freedom for the individ-

ual" and "the practice of free sex including sodomy as a right."

"Marriage between male and female, between female and female are officially recognised by them. What we call incest is not regarded as serious by them."

Meanwhile, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad warned Thursday that power struggles after his departure in October could see the ruling party ousted in future elections.

Presiding for the last time at the annual assembly of his United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), Mahathir predicted UMNO would "follow the fate of those nationalist parties in other countries which no longer exist or which have lost power" if infighting continued.

"The struggle for posts in the party has become so critical that the party's interests, the interests of our race and the nation's interest have been pushed aside," he told more than 2,000 delegates.

### India should not send troops to Iraq: Annan

AFP, New Delhi

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has told India he is not in favour of New Delhi sending troops to Iraq to join a peacekeeping force being put together by Washington, a newspaper reported Thursday.

The Indian Express quoted sources as saying that Annan had voiced his "disapproval" to India's Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha when they met this month in New York.

"Annan met foreign minister Yashwant Sinha on June 10 in New York and in effect voiced his disapproval over the possibility of India sending troops to keep the peace in an operation which did not have UN authorisation," the report said.

Sources quoted in the Indian media said Washington had requested India to send one division, between 17,000 and 20,000 soldiers, to join peacekeeping operations in Iraq.

However, in the absence of a UN umbrella India is likely to press for the creation of a peacekeeping force under international control — such as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

## Musharraf asks West to stop Indian arms buildup

AFP, London

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf told Britain's Times newspaper Thursday that the West must not allow India to develop a military superiority that would leave his country's nuclear arsenal as its only real deterrent.

Musharraf said that a sharp rise in India's defence spending, coupled with restrictions on Pakistan buying military equipment abroad threatened to create a "dangerous" imbalance in force levels between the two rivals, The Times said.

The issue of Kashmir is the major stumbling block to the normalisation of relations between the two nuclear powers.

India accuses Pakistan of aiding and abetting "cross-border terrorism" in the disputed region, but Pakistan says it only extends diplo-

matic and moral support to militant groups there.

Musharraf arrived Tuesday in London at the start of a four-nation tour that takes him next to the United States, where he is scheduled to meet US President George W. Bush at his Camp David retreat on June 24.

The Times reported that Musharraf intends to tell Bush: "There's an imbalance (between India and Pakistan's military strength) which is being created. Don't let it be created."

Musharraf will then travel to Germany and France.

Kashmir, divided between India and Pakistan and claimed by both, has caused two of the three wars between the nuclear neighbours since they gained independence from Britain in 1947.

Meanwhile, infiltration of Islamic

rebels across the disputed border with Pakistan into Indian Kashmir was going on unabated regardless of Pakistani claims, a top Indian army official said Thursday.

"The ground situation in Kashmir has undergone no perceptible change in recent weeks despite pronouncements from all and sundry that no infiltration is taking place," said Lieutenant General Kamal Davar, director general of the Defence Intelligence Agency.

"The support structures for infiltration in terms of launching pads, covering fire by the Pakistan army, has seen no perceptible change in recent weeks," he said, as quoted by the United News of India agency.

Davar said the Indian army had foiled a number of infiltration attempts in recent months and inflicted a heavy toll on the rebels.

## 'Designer baby' born to UK couple

BBC ONLINE

A boy has been born to a British couple who want to use stem cells from his umbilical cord to treat an older brother with a life threatening blood disorder.

Michelle and Jayson Whitaker's baby, Jamie, was genetically selected while he was still an embryo to be a near perfect match to four-year-old Charlie.

The couple went to an American clinic for test tube baby treatment because the selection procedure is not allowed in the UK.

It is not the first UK baby selected to help cure a sibling - a couple whose child was suffering from leukaemia and needed a bone marrow transplant took the same route in 2001.

Other babies "designed" to help their siblings have been born in the US.

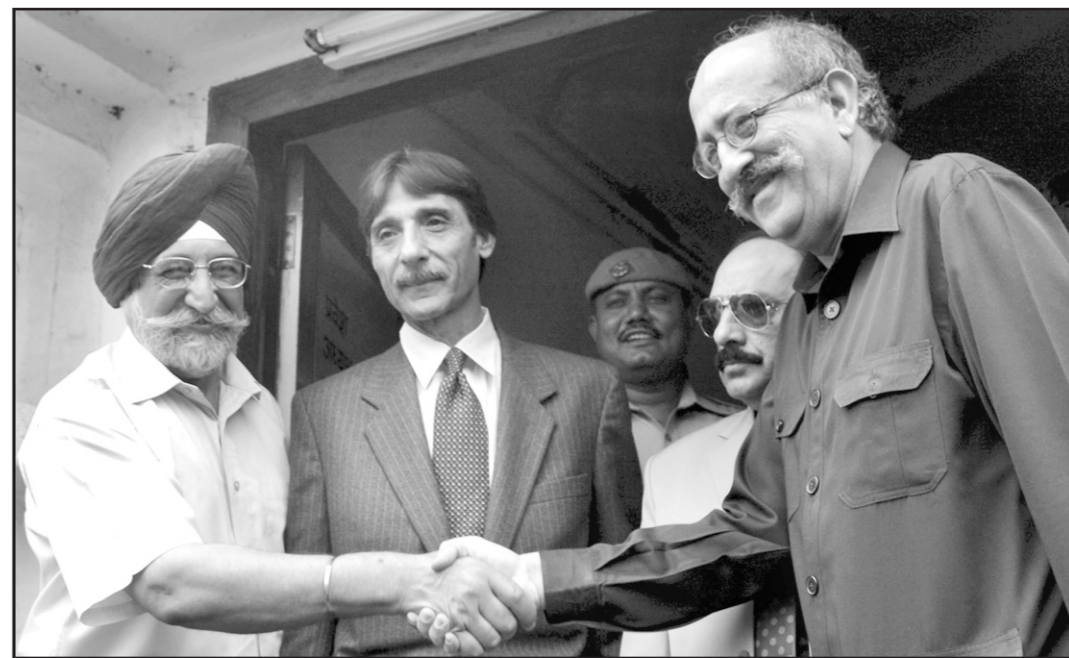


PHOTO: AFP

The Chairman of Delhi Transport Corporation A.J.S. Sahani (L) shakes hands with Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation Managing Director Azfar Shafiq (R), as General Manager of the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation Sayeed Anwar Khan (2nd from R) and an unidentified member of the visiting Pakistani delegation look on, before talks on restarting the Delhi-Lahore bus service, in New Delhi on Thursday.

## Indo-Pak talks on resuming bus service begin

AFP, New Delhi

A team of Pakistani officials Thursday began talks with their Indian counterparts to fix a date for resumption of a bus service between the two countries following an easing of tensions.

The expected date for the resumption is July 1, officials said.

The bus service was inaugurated by Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in 1999 who travelled to Lahore and held a summit with Pakistan's then-prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

It was closed down in December 2001 following an attack on the Indian parliament that New Delhi said was masterminded by Pakistani intelligence agencies. Pakistan denied the charge.

## 'Cigarettes now leading cause of death'

AFP, San Francisco

Cigarettes and tobacco have become a leading cause of illness and death in developing countries, outpacing AIDS and placing an onerous burden on economic systems, the World Bank said Wednesday.

As richer nations slash back on tobacco consumption amid government regulation, developing ones are feeling the brunt of "devastating health damage" caused by its use, it said in a new study unveiled in San Francisco.

"Disease and illness are one of the highest factors in impoverishing people," said World Bank economist, Joy de Beyer, who edited the study "Tobacco Control Policy: Strategies, Successes and Setbacks" released here.

More than 2.5 million people die

each year in third world countries from illnesses related to tobacco consumption, roughly the same level as in developed countries, De Beyer told reporters.

But the level of deaths is likely to rise to seven million people a year within two decades, while tobacco-related deaths and illnesses will likely remain steady or decline in more developed societies, she said.

In addition, the study showed, the negative effects of effects of tobacco use on a country's economic development makes it imperative to reduce consumption.

The bank urged developing nations to counter the growing epidemic of tobacco-related illnesses with a strong mix of public education, higher cigarette taxes and strict controls on advertising the products.

Citing examples of successful

anti-smoking campaigns in Brazil, Bangladesh, Poland, Thailand, Canada and South Africa, the study shows that sharp reductions in tobacco use can be achieved in just a few years.

In Poland, after anti-smoking efforts began in the 1980s, the number of adult males who smoked fell to 40 percent of the total population from about 70.

The positive impact of higher taxes cannot be overemphasized, said Hu Teh-wei, professor of health economics at the University of California at Berkeley, near San Francisco.

It was the main factor in California reducing the number of smokers to less than 20 percent of adults, he said.

"If China raised the tax just 40 cents (per pack), we could cut tobacco deaths by one to two million a year," said Hu.

## Vajpayee's trip to Beijing China reassures Pakistan

AFP, Beijing

China on Thursday sought to reassure Pakistan ahead of a visit by Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, saying it should not be worried about the evolving Sino-Indian relationship.

China is a traditional ally of Pakistan, making for a complex balancing act as its ties with India gradually improve.

"I'd like to point out that the development of relations between China and India will not affect the traditional friendship between China and Pakistan," a Chinese foreign

ministry official said.

"On the other hand, the good relations between China and Pakistan are also not targeted at any third country," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Vajpayee will arrive in Beijing late Sunday, and will participate in an official welcoming ceremony presided over by Premier Wen Jiabao the day after, the official said.

He will meet with President Hu Jintao, while it remains unclear if he will also hold talks with Hu's predecessor, the still-powerful Jiang Zemin, according to the official.

## US asks Pakistan to curb pro-Taliban elements

PTI, Washington

A US task force co-sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Asia Society has asked Pakistan to prevent pro-Taliban elements from using its territory for cross-border attacks on Afghanistan, and on Iran and Russia to stop aiding warlords.

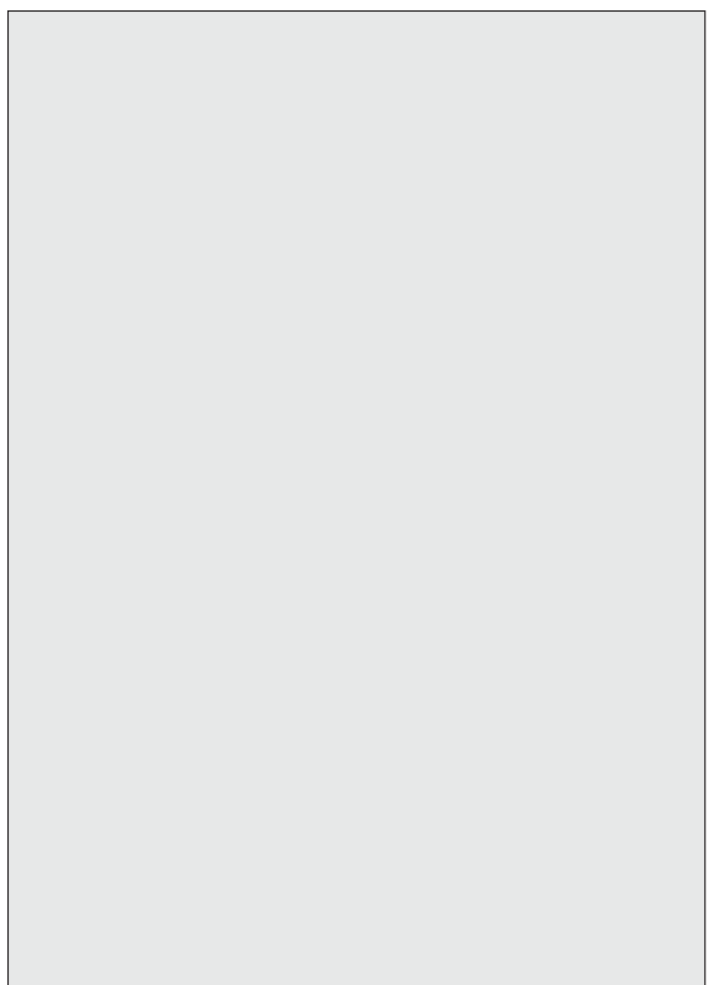
"Tehran, Moscow and Islamabad, all claim they are supporting the Ahmed Karzai government and deny they are meddling in Afghan affairs. US diplomacy should aim to bring reality in line with stated policy," the task force said.

The task force is co-chaired by Frank G Wisner, former US ambassador to India, Nicholas Platt, former US ambassador to Pakistan and current President of the Asia Society and Marshal M Bouton, President of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. It warned that without greater support for the transitional government of Karzai, security in Afghanistan would deteriorate further, prospects for economic reconstruction would dim and the country will revert to "warlord-dominated anarchy".

"This failure could gravely erode America's credibility around the globe and mark a major defeat in the US-led war on terrorism," the task force said.

It said the present target of a 9,000-man Afghan National Army by mid-2004 is "ludicrously inadequate" and urged the US to target a force of 27,000 men, including integrated militias, to give the central government a credible peacekeeping capacity.

The task force also called for reconstruction assistance of at least one billion dollars to Afghanistan for the next five years.



## Coffin protest in Sri Lanka parliament

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's main opposition Thursday smuggled in an empty coffin to the tightly-guarded parliament to protest what they called the government's inability to maintain law and order.

Opposition legislators dressed in black paraded an infant's coffin, breaching security and prompting the Speaker Joseph Michael Perera to adjourn sittings for an hour to clear the assembly hall, an official said.

The incident is the second of its kind in a month -- members of President Chandrika Kumaratunga's People's Alliance, the main opposition in parliament, earlier brought a funeral wreath into the House.

The opposition charges that the government had failed to curb a rising wave of crime and a spate of killings blamed on Tamil Tiger rebels, the government's peace negotiating partner.



PHOTO: AFP

Indian villager Gour Adhikari (R) poses with his dog and 9 year old girl Kamamoni Hasda (L) at Khanyan, some 60km north-west of Kolkata on Thursday. Hansda a Santhal tribal girl married the dog in the presence of more than a hundred guests at a marriage ceremony held in the village on June 11. According to Santhal tribal custom, if a child's first tooth appears on the upper gum he or she is in grave danger that can only be warded off by a marriage to a dog.

## Latest al-Qaeda captive full of information: Pak minister

AFP, Islamabad

A key al-Qaeda "facilitator" captured in northwest Pakistan has extensive information about the shadowy terror network's operations, interior minister Faisal Saleh Hayat said Thursday.

"Being a facilitator he is privy to certain activities which normal operatives do not have. He must have a lot of information," Hayat told AFP.

The captive, identified as Abu Adel Al-Jazeera, is the prize catch among five men picked up in a pre-dawn swoop Wednesday in Peshawar, 170 kilometres (108 miles) northwest of Islamabad and 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the Afghan border.

Hayat said all five were "Arabs and Afghans."

Al-Jazeera was being interrogated Thursday by Pakistani investigators with international assistance. US Central Intelligence Agency experts have been helping Pakistani counterparts hunt down fugitives from Osama bin Laden's network.

"Al-Jazeera is being questioned by Pakistani investigators, but we have the cooperation of international and foreign agencies," Hayat said.

"We have to cooperate with US, European and Middle Eastern agencies as al-Qaeda is not only linked to Pakistan."