

## Asbestos-laden French ship returns to home port

AFP, Brest

The giant aircraft carrier Clemenceau, once a proud symbol of France's naval might, returned to home port in Brest yesterday after failing to find a foreign country willing to dismantle its asbestos-contaminated hull.

The Clemenceau docked amid tight security at around 10:00 am (0800 GMT) at the Breton naval base in northwestern France, after a lengthy and controversial journey under tow to India and back.

## Rebels try to kill Manipur CM, but fail

REUTERS, Imphal

Separatist militants attacked a convoy in which the chief minister of Manipur was travelling yesterday but he was not wounded, police said.

The attack on Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh by rebels firing from automatic weapons took place at Wiakhong in Thoubal district, some 55 km west of Imphal, the state capital.

Police suspect rebels of the outlawed People's Liberation Army (PLA) were responsible. The attackers fired at Singh's car from a vehicle that was travelling in the opposite direction.

## Saddam back in court to hear witnesses

REUTERS, Baghdad

Saddam Hussein returned to court on Wednesday to hear testimony from defence witnesses for some of his lesser-known co-defendants, who like the ousted Iraqi president have denied crimes against humanity.

Saddam and three other senior Baath party figures being tried with him had not been present since they lodged not guilty pleas to formal charges read out on Monday. Saddam refused to plead but the judge ruled he had denied the charge.

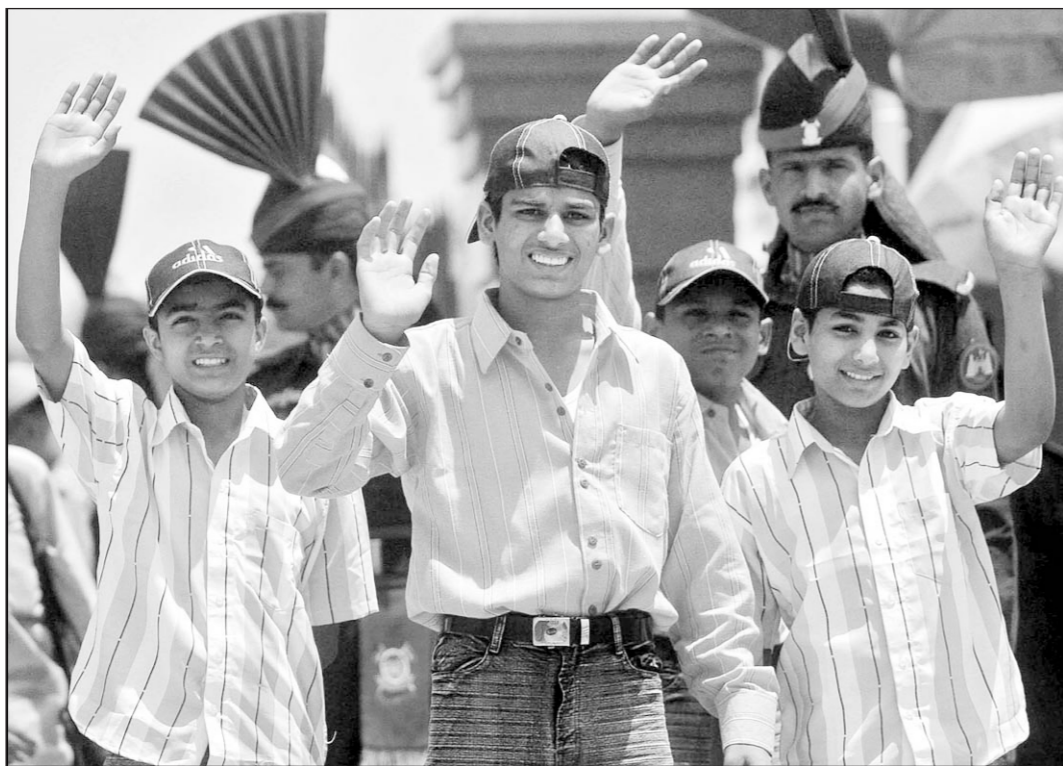


PHOTO: AFP

Pakistani child prisoners wave after crossing the Pakistan-India border at the Wagah Border Post yesterday. Four youths were among six Pakistani nationals released by Indian authorities as relations between the South Asian neighbours continue to thaw.

## US, India try to rescue nuclear deal

REUTERS, Washington

Senior US and Indian officials plan to meet in London next week to try and rescue an imperilled agreement that would give India access to US nuclear energy technology for the first time in three decades.

Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns, the lead US negotiator, said he and Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran agreed on the talks in a phone call on Tuesday.

"We agreed to meet to go over all aspects of the US-India agreement so we can move this along on both sides... We agreed to meet next week in London," Burns said in remarks at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He did not specify a day.

The nuclear agreement has run into serious trouble in Washington and New Delhi, where critics on both sides complain their side got too little and the other side got too much.

In the United States, Congress must approve the deal, which was first agreed in principle by President George W. Bush and Indian Prime

Minister Manmohan Singh last July 18.

The leading Democratic supporter, Rep. Tom Lantos of California, last week said the accord lacked the support needed to pass and proposed a compromise intended to keep it alive but which could delay the process.

It was a cold dose of reality since the administration, Burns in particular, has been upbeat about quick passage of the agreement, which would radically alter 30 years of US policy designed to punish India because it developed nuclear weapons in contravention of international norms.

Burns said he would meet Lantos on Wednesday and declined to publicly critique the lawmaker's compromise. Another senior State Department official last week rejected Lantos' proposal and Burns said "we feel we have put our best foot forward."

But Burns also seemed to leave the door open to discussion saying he would share with Lantos "our ideas about how this agreement should be put forward for a vote."

## Suicide bomber kills 7 in Russia's southern region

REUTERS, Moscow

A suicide bomber killed seven people including a top Russian policeman yesterday when he drove his car into a police convoy in the southern Russian region of Ingushetia.

Among the dead was Dzhairail Kostoyev, deputy head of the Ingushetia interior ministry, two of his guards, and four civilians, a police spokesman said.

The news came simultaneously with a report from Interfax news agency that unknown gunmen had killed the governor of a detention centre in the region of Karachayevocherkessia, further from Chechnya but also increasingly prone to violence.

Rebels have pledged total war against police in the North Caucasus, saying they are collaborating with Russian occupiers.

Islamist Web sites on Wednesday published comments from a rebel commander in Ingushetia, who pledged such attacks would increase.

## US leads move to halt Lanka's slide to war

### 4 killed in fresh violence

AFP, Colombo

The United States is leading international efforts to halt Sri Lanka's slide back to war, diplomats and officials said yesterday as four more people died in fresh violence.

A US State Department official left here Tuesday, urging the government and Tamil Tiger rebels to resume talks suspended in April 2003 and stop violence that has claimed over 200 lives since early April.

But a day after the visit three policemen were killed in two landmine attacks while a civilian was shot dead in the northeast, the military said.

"The trend lines are discouraging in terms of the increasing provocations by the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), the fact that killings are increasing," US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for

South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Camp said at the end of his two-day visit.

"All of these suggest Sri Lanka is not on the way back to a lasting ceasefire," he said.

Sri Lanka, meanwhile, came on for criticism from Amnesty International for a spate of killings.

"Regardless of who is responsible for the attacks, the Sri Lankan government has obligations under international law to take steps to prevent such killings," the London-based rights watchdog said.

Camp's talks came before a crucial meeting May 30 in Tokyo of Sri Lanka's key international financial backers.

The US, Japan, the European Union and Norway co-chaired a meeting in June 2003 to raise 4.5 billion dollars in international aid pledges in support of the island's

peace efforts.

But much of the aid was tied to progress in the Norwegian-backed and internationally supported peace initiative, which hit snags by mid-2003.

He said Washington had also "encouraged" the 25-member European Union to ban the Tigers and cut off their international funding.

The US banned the LTTE in 1997, five years after India outlawed the LTTE after accusing it of involvement in the assassination of former Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi.

At least three policemen were killed in mine attacks in Sri Lanka yesterday while unidentified gunmen shot dead a Tamil civilian, military officials said.



## 'Netaji' dead, mystery alive

REUTERS, New Delhi

It is one of the enduring mysteries of India's freedom struggle, but a long awaited report on the fate of charismatic leader Subhas Chandra Bose has failed to solve the riddle of his disappearance more than 60 years ago.

After a six-year investigation, the report published on Wednesday said Bose was dead but was not killed in a plane crash as widely believed.

But the report said it could not say how he died, and its conclusions were contradicted by the government, which backed the plane crash theory.

The investigation also said that the ashes in a temple in Japan were not that of Bose -- again rejected by the government.

"The government has examined the report... and has not agreed with the findings that Netaji did not die in the plane crash and the ashes in the Renkoji Temple were not of Netaji," a government statement said without elaborating.

Bose, popularly known as "Netaji" or leader, led the rebel Indian National Army that fought British colonial rule in India in an alliance with the Japanese during World War Two.

Earlier, official reports said Bose died in a Japanese air crash in Taiwan in August, 1945 at the age of 48 and his cremated remains were sent to Japan.

## US releases 9/11 video of Pentagon jet crash

REUTERS, Washington

Video images of a hijacked airliner slamming into the Pentagon taken by two security cameras on September 11 were released for the first time by the US government on Tuesday.

The video, released by the government in conjunction with a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit filed by the Judicial Watch legal activist group, was a longer, more complete version of still-frame images that were leaked to the news media in 2002.

The front of the hijacked Boeing 757 can be seen entering one video frame, with a massive explosion and orange fireball erupting upon impact with the Pentagon, followed by a plume of smoke.

US authorities have said five al-Qaeda hijackers seized control of American Airlines Flight 77, a flight from Washington Dulles International Airport in northern Virginia bound for Los Angeles, and flew it into the Pentagon.

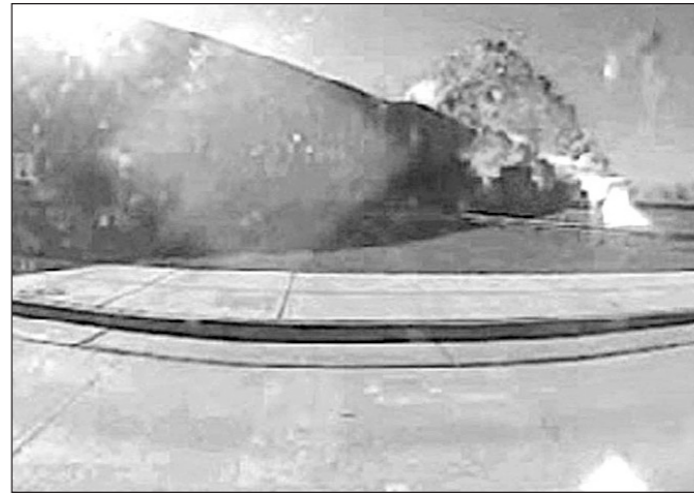


PHOTO: AFP

In this image taken from a Pentagon security camera video released yesterday, an explosion is shown moments after American Airlines Flight 77 crashes into the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 in Washington. Two security cameras at a Pentagon parking lot caught the moment that American Airlines Flight 77 slammed into the south west side of the military headquarters.