



PHOTO: AFP  
Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (C) and his wife Gursharan Kaur (L) are welcomed by the Cuban Minister for Higher Education Juan Vela (R) at Havana's airport on Thursday. Singh is attending the Non-Aligned summit in Cuba, where top diplomats from more than 100 developing countries are gathering since Monday.

## NAM must make positive contribution to world: India

PTI, Havana

As the summit of Non-Aligned grouping begins, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday said the NAM must make a constructive contribution to the new world order free from fear and war and the time has come not to divide the world further but to reduce tensions.

He said there was new anxiety in the world on how to deal with terror and the role of non-state actors and the NAM must live up to its new potential in the highly uncertain, insecure world that was prevailing now.

Talking to reporters on way from Brasilia to Havana, Singh said non-alignment was a state of mind -- to think independently about options and widen development choices -- and in that sense NAM was relevant today as it was before.

He said soon after the end of the

cold war era there was complacency in the western world that capitalism would solve all problems but now there was a new anxiety in the world on how to deal with the problem of terror and the role of non-state actors.

"The future of humanity is being increasingly questioned and people are talking about a clash of civilisations, people have also been talking of evil empires.

"So, I do believe that cold war may have ended and the NAM, comprising 116 countries representing all regions of the world, can help and make a constructive contribution to building a new world order free from fear, want and poverty," the Prime Minister said.

"NAM must live up to its new potential in the highly uncertain, insecure world that we live in," he said.

## Bush pushes Senate to vote for Indian N-deal

REUTERS, Washington

President George W Bush has appealed to Republican leaders to ensure the Senate votes on a nuclear cooperation agreement with India before it adjourns this month, senior US officials said on Thursday.

The Senate is rushing to finish its legislative business by Sept 29 but has yet to set a date for voting on the India agreement.

The accord would give India access to US nuclear fuel and reactors banned for 30 years because New Delhi refused to sign the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and developed nuclear weapons.

"There can be no doubt that this is a foreign policy priority" of Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher told Reuters.

He admitted there was still no firm date for Senate action, but

expressed confidence that when the vote occurs, there will be strong support for the deal, as there was when the House of Representatives approved it in July.

Another senior administration official, who asked not to be named, said government officials have been urging senators to act and Bush has made direct appeals.

The agreement "has been a very high priority for the president and it still is," the official said.

The main complication is unrelated legislation attached to the Senate India bill, which would push Washington to implement a long-delayed commitment to expanded inspections by the UN nuclear watchdog of American civilian nuclear facilities.

Republican Sen Richard Lugar of Indiana, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Sen. Joseph Biden of Delaware, the panel's senior Democrat, linked the

two bills to improve chances the inspection protocol would be approved.

The administration official who spoke anonymously said, however, that the differences "don't appear to be insurmountable" and a compromise is likely.

Even if the Senate votes soon, its bill will have to be reconciled with the House version and be sent back to both chambers for a final vote.

Some US experts have questioned whether India may be losing interest in the deal, citing harsh attacks on some provisions by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

But Boucher rejected that conclusion, given India's growing need for nuclear energy to support its burgeoning economy.

"I don't think there is any question about how committed India is to going through with this agreement," he said.



PHOTO: AFP  
Japan's newborn Prince Hisahito sleeps in the arms of his mother Princess Kiko as they leave the Tokyo hospital with her newborn son Prince Hisahito yesterday.

## Princess Kiko leaves hospital with son

AP, Tokyo

Japan's Princess Kiko and her newborn son left a Tokyo hospital Friday, a week after the birth of the first new male heir to the Chrysanthemum Throne in four decades.

Hisahito's birth was hailed as forestalling a succession crisis for one of the world's oldest imperial systems, which allows only male rulers.

Footage aired by national broadcaster NHK showed Kiko walking out of the hospital with the baby in her arms, accompanied by her husband Prince Akihito. The prince is the second son of Emperor Akihito.

Emperor Akihito's two sons had three daughters between them but no sons until the new arrival.

## Indian ministers warned for breaking heritage laws

AFP, New Delhi

Senior urban planning officials are among a dozen Indian ministers ordered to remove illegal changes made to their grand government residences built during the British Raj, reports said yesterday.

The urban planning ministry has issued letters warning the ministers and some members of parliament "to preserve the authenticity of Lutyens' Delhi," said a government official, who asked not to be named.

"These notices have been issued over a period of several weeks," he told AFP.

British architect Sir Edward Lutyens designed the sprawling bungalows, set amidst acres of lawns and gardens, almost a century ago.

## Australia to have English tests for new citizens

REUTERS, Canberra

Australia will demand new citizens pass an English language test and sign up to undefined Australian values, Prime Minister John Howard said on Friday, but denied any racist overtones in the coming policy.

Howard said the conservative government was also considering lifting to four years from three the wait for new immigrants to become an Australian and imposing a "fairly firm" test on knowledge of Australian history.

"It won't become more difficult if you're fair dinkum, and most people who come to this country are fair dinkum about becoming part of the community," Howard told Australian radio, falling back on a local slang term for genuine.

Australia is a nation of immigrants, with nearly one in four of the country's 20 million people born overseas. Almost six million people have settled since 1945 and Australia plans to accept about 144,000 new immigrants in 2006-07.

## Letter from captive Israeli soldier given to family

REUTERS, Gaza

A letter written by abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit was given to his family by Gaza militants in a potential breakthrough after nearly three months in captivity, a source involved in the talks said yesterday.

The letter written in Shalit's handwriting is the first tangible sign of life since militants from the governing Hamas group and two other factions seized him in a cross-border raid on June 25, prompting an Israeli offensive.

"The abducted soldier wrote the letter by his own handwriting to his parents telling them he is fine and well," the source told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity.

## Fight for Iran sanctions will take weeks: US

AFP, Washington

The United States acknowledged Thursday that it will face tough resistance from some of its key allies as it presses for UN sanctions against Iran over its suspect nuclear programme.

Iran's refusal to comply with UN demands that it suspend uranium enrichment activities some fear could produce nuclear weapons is set to feature high on the agenda when world leaders gather in New

York next week for the UN General Assembly.

US officials have for weeks been expressing strong confidence that the permanent Security Council members -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States -- will swiftly reach agreement on political and economic sanctions designed to force Tehran to abandon its enrichment programme.

Such sanctions were called for in a Security Council resolution adopted in July, which gave Iran until

August 31 to freeze its enrichment activity -- a demand Tehran ignored.

But with some Security Council partners increasingly reticent to go down the path of sanctions, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack admitted Thursday that the upcoming negotiations would be "hard-fought".

"The reality of it is that there are going to be intense negotiations on this," he said.

## Former Thai election officials convicted

AP, Bangkok

Three former election commissioners were convicted yesterday of dereliction of duty and sentenced to two years in prison for their role in Thailand's election fiasco.

It was their second conviction over their handling of April 2 general elections, which were later nullified. In July, a court sentenced them each to four years in prison in a related case that they are appealing.

## Israel army in disarray over Lebanon failures

AFP, Jerusalem

A general resigns, a colonel is disciplined and the command structure is battered by an unrelenting storm of criticism: the Israeli army is in disarray as it struggles to cope with the failures of the war in Lebanon.

A month after the 34-day campaign against the Shia militia Hezbollah ended, the barrage of brickbats continues, with the military and political

leadership both under fire for their handling of a deadly conflict that failed to achieve its main aims.

Two days after Israel's northern army commander resigned, it emerged that embattled army chief of staff Dan Halutz disciplined the head of an armoured brigade for criticising a superior in front of his subordinates during the war.

Colonel Amnon Eshel, head of the seventh brigade, reportedly com-

plained that his immediate boss, General Gal Hirsch, was "completely cut off from realities on the ground" as his badly prepared men battled to counter Hezbollah rocket attacks on Israel.

Halutz "severely reprimanded" Eshel for disrespecting the military hierarchy and suspended him from promotion for two years, an army spokesman told AFP.

## Tagging terrorism with Islam Muslims in furore over pope's remarks

REUTERS, Jakarta

Pope Benedict's comments about Islam could hurt global religious harmony, government and religious leaders in the world's most populous Muslim countries said yesterday.

A growing chorus of Muslim leaders have called on the Pope to apologise for the remarks he made in a speech in Germany on Tuesday when he used the terms "Jihad" and "holy war."

Pakistan's National Assembly, parliament's lower house, unanimously passed a resolution condemning the Pope's comments.

"This statement has hurt sentiments of the Muslims," the resolution said. "This is also against the charter of the United Nations. This house demands the Pope retract his remarks in the interest of harmony among different religions of the world."

Pakistan is the world's second most populous Muslim nation after Indonesia.

Islamic scholars say the Pontiff's comments show how little

he understands Islam and some have said Islamic countries should threaten to break off relations with the Vatican.

The Vatican issued a statement to say the Pope had never meant to offend Islam.

In his speech at the University of Regensburg, Benedict quoted criticism of Islam and the Prophet Mohammad (SM) by 14th century Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus, who wrote that everything Mohammad brought was evil and inhuman, "such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached."

Benedict repeatedly quoted Manuel's argument that spreading the faith through violence is unreasonable, adding: "Violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul."

The reaction was swift.

"It is obvious from the statements that the Pope doesn't have a correct understanding of Islam," said Din Syamsuddin, chairman of Muhammadiyah, the second largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia.

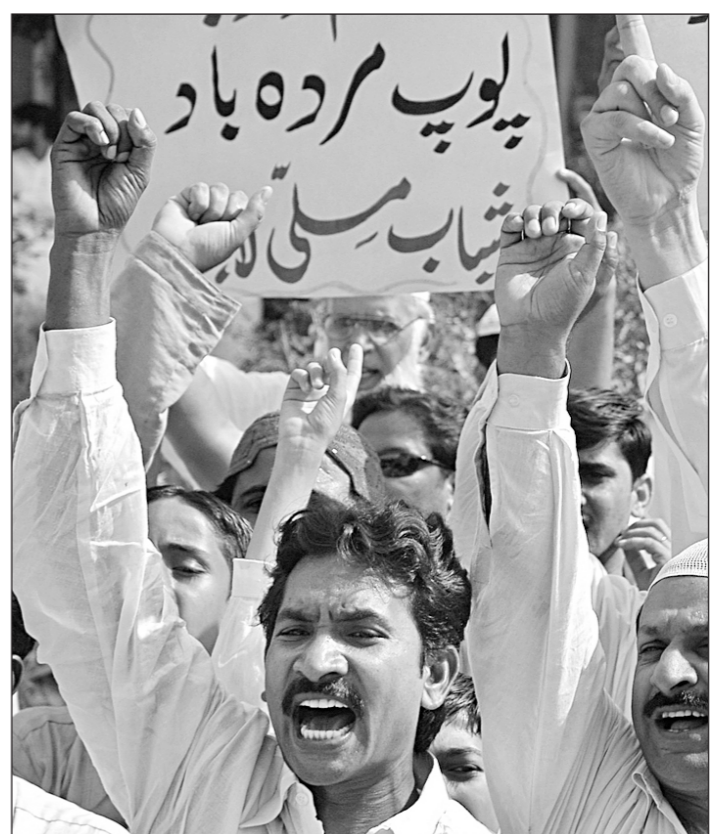


PHOTO: AFP  
Pakistani Muslims carry placards and shout anti-Papal slogans during a protest in Lahore yesterday. Dozens of youths from Islamic party Shabbab-e-Millii, a youth wing of Pakistani fundamentalist Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) party, staged a noisy demonstration to protest remarks by Pope Benedict XVI linking Islam with violence.

## Dying glaciers draw curious to Swiss Alpine peaks

REUTERS, Inside The Rhone Glacier

Tourists are flocking to Switzerland's highest peaks to see formidable Alpine glaciers melt away before their eyes -- and sometimes, onto their heads.

Emerging from a 100-metre-deep (300 feet) tunnel dug into the Rhone Glacier, the source of the Rhone River that flows to Geneva and through France, Mark Scheibner of New Jersey said concern about climate change had spurred his interest.

"It is shrinking quickly, just as we are standing here," the 48-year-old said, drops of water falling above him from the ice grotto's translucent entryway. "If anything, it makes me want to bring my daughter here to see it as soon as I can."

While it is hardly unusual for ice to melt in the summer sun, scientists are concerned that a heating-up of the world's atmosphere is causing Europe's glaciers to steadily disappear.

Swiss glaciers have lost more than 15 percent of their surface area in the last two decades, and could vanish almost entirely within a century if climate shifts are not moderated, said Max Maisch, a glaciologist from the University of Zurich.

As one of the only glaciers in Europe accessible by car, and with its man-made grotto that lets visitors walk underneath the ice mass, the Rhone Glacier has drawn many visitors looking to see for themselves how global warming is felt in the mountains.

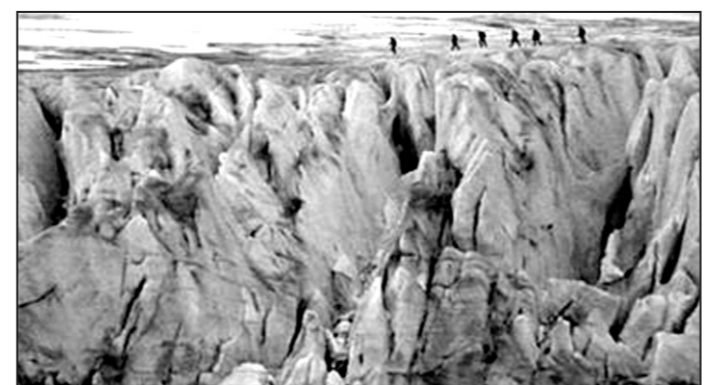


PHOTO: REUTERS  
Mountain climbers are silhouetted against the sky while they take a hike on top of the Rhone glacier in the Swiss Alps in this file photo.

## Rival Palestinian leaders trade demands amid deadly shooting

### 5 security officers killed in attack

AFP, Ramallah

Rival Palestinian leaders traded demands for a unity government yesterday as five security officers were killed in a brazen daylight attack, underscoring the difficulty of forming a coalition cabinet.

Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas and Prime Minister Ismail Haniya agreed on a policy outline for the new government on Monday but conditions on its make-up risk delaying its formation and any subsequent lifting of aid cuts.

"Anybody who joins the government from whichever party has to be honest and capable and not suspected of corruption," said Haniya, head of the Hamas cabinet and alluding to past cabinets run by Abbas's Fatah and seen as corrupt.

"This government has suffered over the last six months from a clash of responsibilities," between the cabinet and Abbas's presidency, added the prime minister, who will be charged with putting together the new cabinet.

He said his Hamas-led administration had been "without security apparatus, media or money" since it took office last March, ushering in a period of unparalleled fiscal and political crisis in the Palestinian territories.

A political adviser to Haniya, Ahmed Youssef, said Hamas wanted twice the number of cabinet posts as Fatah in the new coalition government.

He told AFP that given that the

Islamists won 74 seats to Fatah's 45 in January's parliamentary election, Hamas should have eight to 10 cabinet portfolios to their moderate rivals' four or five.

But Youssef did concede that key portfolios such as finance and foreign affairs, likely to have the most contact with the outside world, should go to independents "to avoid disagreements and polarisation".

Less than 24 hours earlier Abbas demanded in his West Bank powerbase that Hamas officials detained by Israel, and an Israeli soldier held in Gaza by militants, should be released before the new cabinet is announced.

He also said the announcement of a new government depended on a complete lack of violence in the Palestinian territories.

But in Gaza City, five intelligence officers were shot dead on Friday in broad daylight in the worst intra-Palestinian killings since a spate of bitter feuding broke out between Fatah and Hamas sympathisers earlier this year.

There was no immediate claim for the brazen drive-by shooting in the Hamas-controlled Shatti refugee camp near Haniya's home.

The five agents, a general in the Fatah-dominated intelligence branch and four of his subordinates, were killed instantly when unknown attackers raked their vehicle with gunfire, a security source said.