

## Little elation in Pakistan, India over peace moves

REUTERS, New Delhi

India and Pakistan have only ended a two-month hiatus in their fragile peace process by agreeing to resume talks, and a pact to fight terrorism together would be a challenge to implement, analysts said on Sunday.

Although a joint statement after talks between Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in the Cuban capital of Havana on Saturday was full of good intentions, there was little new in it, they said.

Singh and Musharraf agreed that top diplomats of the South Asian neighbours would return to the negotiating table after India put off peace talks as investigators suspected a Pakistani hand in the July 11 bombings in Mumbai, which killed 186 people.

"Resumption of a dialogue is a positive development. We had gone backwards and now we have come back to where we were before the Mumbai bombings. This is not a step forward," said G. Parthasarathy, a former Indian envoy to Pakistan.

"In any case, we had to go back to the negotiating table. Our position was untenable especially because we had no evidence of Pakistani involvement in Mumbai," he said.

Singh and Musharraf met on the sidelines of a summit of Non-Aligned Movement nations in Havana.

The India-Pakistan peace process, launched in 2004 two years after the nuclear-armed nations came to the brink of their fourth war,

has been marked by bouts of euphoria and disillusionment and undercut by domestic political pressures.

Progress on key concerns such as Kashmir and cross-border militant violence has been slow and the process has been hurt by separatist violence in Indian Kashmir and attacks elsewhere across India, blamed on Islamist groups based in Pakistan.

An Indian army spokesman said on Sunday that troops had shot dead eight Muslim militants in Kashmir over the weekend.

While the latest pledge by Singh and Musharraf was a reaffirmation of their intention to push for peace, the devil would be in the implementation, analysts said.

"The decision reflects realisation on both sides that they have only one option and that is to talk. It is not a breakthrough but there is no other option," said Mutahir Ahmed, who teaches international relations at Karachi University.

The move to set up a joint agency to tackle terrorism was a step forward in trying to mitigate India's biggest concern in bilateral relations, said Indian Foreign Secretary-designate Shiv Shankar Menon.

"We have not done this before with Pakistan. It is new, we have got the mandate. It is to identify the kind of terrorism and organisations," the Press Trust of India quoted Menon as telling reporters in Havana after the talks.



India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (L) speaks during a joint press conference with Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf after a bilateral meeting in the framework of the XIV Non-Aligned Movement Summit on Saturday. Singh and Musharraf agreed to resume peace talks after an hour long discussion -- largely on the Kashmir dispute -- which were the first high-level meeting between the two countries since deadly bombings in Mumbai on July 11.

## NAM bashes both US, UN

REUTERS, Havana

Washington's biggest enemies, from communist Cuba to North Korea, called on developing nations on Saturday to challenge US dominance through a revived Non-Aligned Movement labelled a Cold War relic by critics.

More than 50 heads of state and leaders from over 100 Third World countries, among them Iran and Venezuela, rejected US use of the "axis of evil" label and supported Tehran's right to nuclear technology for peaceful use.

"American imperialism is in decline. A new, bi-polar world is emerging," Venezuela's leftist President Hugo Chavez said.

"The non-aligned group has been

relaunched to unite the South under its umbrella," Chavez, who will host a visit in Caracas by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Sunday, told Venezuelan television from Havana.

But governments with friendly ties to Washington, among them India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Chile, Peru and Colombia, sought to steer the summit way from confrontation and finger-pointing at the United States.

"I don't regard this summit as anti-US, or for that matter anti-anybody," Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told a news conference.

Cuba, which hosted the summit under the new leadership of Raul Castro because his brother and

iconic revolutionary Fidel Castro was still recovering from life-threatening surgery, said the movement was reborn.

"The idea that the movement must go beyond statements and take action in international forums has gained force here. Our strength must emerge from our numbers," Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque. NAM nations are almost two thirds of the UN.

Leaders took turns at the podium to criticise global poverty, unfair trade practices and "arbitrary" actions by powerful nations that -- they complained -- controlled the United Nations. Some said NAM should be strengthened as an alternative.

## Lanka sinks Tiger arms ship ahead of talks

Troops blamed for killing 100 civilians this month

AFP, AP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's navy gunboats and war planes bombed a suspected Tamil Tiger arms ship yesterday and killed eight insurgents off the east coast, despite efforts by peace broker Norway to hold talks to uphold a truce.

The ministry said in a statement that naval craft called for air support after the unnamed vessel opened fire on patrol craft which ordered it to head to the northeastern naval port of Trincomalee.

"When ordered by navy patrol craft to sail towards Trincomalee for checking, the vessel opened fire," the statement said, adding that fighter jets were called in to attack the ship.

A military official said the navy believed it had killed 8 of 12 crew members and that the battle was still ongoing, eight hours after first contact.

The vessel was "suspected to be one ferrying arms and ammunition for the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam)," the ministry said.

There was no immediate reaction from the guerrillas to the military claim.

Tiger rebels are known to have arranged arms supplies through Indo-China, Burma, Thailand and states that were part of the former

Soviet Union.

The military has intercepted the transfer of weapons from bigger ships to smaller craft.

The guerrillas are also reputed to own a fleet of merchant vessels operated through front organisations.

Earlier in the day, the guerrillas carried out artillery and mortar attacks against two military bases in the island's east and troops retaliated in kind, the defence ministry said.

It said there were no casualties among the troops. There was no word from the Tigers about the ground fighting.

Military officials said two security personnel and two soldiers were wounded while an electricity utility employee in the embattled northern peninsula of Jaffna was shot dead on Saturday night by suspected rebels.

Two civilians were gunned down and two more wounded by unidentified gunmen in Trincomalee Sunday, police said, adding they suspected the killing may be linked to rebel factional fighting.

The latest violence may hamper moves by Norway to arrange talks between the two sides early next month in Oslo, diplomats said, noting both sides had agreed to work to salvage a truce in place since February 2002.

The validity of the ceasefire has come under question after more than 1,500 people died in an upsurge of tit-for-tat violence in the past 10 months.

The Tigers on Sunday accused government troops and paramilitary forces of killing nearly 100 civilians, mainly in the Jaffna peninsula, this month alone.

The government denied the allegation and said it was a plan by the Tigers to discredit security forces.

The authorities also exhumed the bodies of two aid workers who were among 17 shot dead at a French charity in the northeastern town of Muttur last month.

Truce monitors blamed security forces for the massacre of 17 employees of the French Action Against Hunger, a charge denied by the government. The bodies of two victims were exhumed Saturday as part of a new probe involving Australian forensic experts.

Tamil rebels have waged an insurgency for a separate ethnic homeland in the majority Sinhalese nation where more than 60,000 people have died since the rebellion began in 1972.

## 18 pilgrims die in Pakistan

REUTERS, Karachi

Eighteen Pakistan pilgrims died during a three-day festival at a Muslim shrine, some by heat stroke and others by drowning in a river, a police official said yesterday.

Thousands of devotees attended the annual celebrations of Muslim saint Lal Shahbaz Qalender in Sehwan Sharif, some 350 km from the port city of Karachi.

Twelve people, mostly old men and women died of heat, while six young devotees drowned while swimming in a river near the shrine.

Last year more than 30 pilgrims had been killed in similar circumstances.

## Pak 'nuke father' leaves hospital after surgery

AP, Karachi

A former Pakistani scientist who has confessed to leaking nuclear weapons technology to Iran, North Korea and Libya was discharged from a hospital yesterday after undergoing cancer surgery, hospital and security officials said.

Abdul Qadeer Khan, 70, had surgery for prostate cancer last week at the Aga Khan hospital in Karachi.

Khan was discharged early Sunday, a hospital doctor said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to talk to the press.

Khan was taken to his sister's home in an upscale residential neighbourhood of Karachi where dozens of paramilitary troops and intelligence agents were deployed, a security official said. Only family will be allowed to visit Khan, he added.

## Police kill five Maoist rebels in Indian forests

REUTERS, Raipur

Police in the insurgency hit Bastar region of Chhattisgarh killed at least five Maoist rebels in a lengthy gun battle, officers said yesterday.

Police opened fire on dozens of guerrillas as they met in forests in Kanker district, 225 km southwest of the state capital, Raipur, late on Saturday.

"We fired over 100 rounds on the Maoists in a 30-minute encounter ... at least five rebels were killed, including a divisional commander," the district's police chief, Pradeep Gupta, told Reuters.

Chhattisgarh is among the worst affected of 13 Indian states hit by the Maoist insurgency. Officials say at least 260 people have been killed in rebel violence in the state since January, mostly poor tribals.

India's Maoists, who hold sway over vast rural swathes of eastern, central and southern India, say they are fighting for the rights of poor peasants and landless labourers.