

No date set for Indo-Pak summit: Vajpayee

JAKARTA, Jan 12: Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said today no date had been set for a visit to New Delhi by Pakistan's military ruler General Pervez Musharraf, reports Reuters.

Asked by Reuters about media reports suggesting the Pakistan leader was ready to visit India for a dialogue to try to end a long-running territorial dispute over Kashmir, Vajpayee said: "I've seen the report, but no date has been fixed as yet."

Asked if that meant Musharraf would go, Vajpayee said: "Even that is not final."

"That is a question that should be directed to him. How do I know when he will come?" he added. Vajpayee is now on a visit to Indonesia.

Junior foreign minister Ajit Panja, however, ruled out any imminent visit.

"There is no plan (for Musharraf's visit). Our policy remains constant and until conditions are there for peaceful talks, until terrorism stops, it is not possible to talk for peace," Panja, who was accompanying Vajpayee, told Reuters.

Vajpayee did not say which media report he was referring to. He was scheduled to fly to the Indonesian resort island of Bali today before heading back to India at the weekend.

## US air force plane crashes in S Korea

SEOUL, Jan 12: A US Air Force Thunderbolt A-10 jet crashed Friday into a greenhouse complex near the Pyeongtaek air base in southern South Korea but the pilot ejected moments before hand, police said, reports AFP.

A fire caused by the crash damaged about 990 square meters of vinyl greenhouses used for growing vegetables.

Firemen rushed to the scene to put out the blaze, but were held back because of the explosives in the fighter jet.

Korean officials said the crash happened as the pilot attempted to land at the US air base.

## Underground bunker found below Suharto son's house

JAKARTA, Jan 12: Indonesian police have detected an underground bunker below the central Jakarta home of former President Suharto's fugitive son, Hutomo "Tommy" Mandala Putra, a police official said today.

"We picked up georadar signals of a bunker below Tommy's house. We are going to try to open it today," an officer at national police headquarters, requesting anonymity, told AFP.

"If we don't find the entrance, we will force our way in, using special tools," he added without elaborating.

Forensics police armed with georadar detectors scanned the grounds of the homes of the elder Suharto and his children on Wednesday and Thursday, in an effort to confirm the existence of interconnecting bunkers below the former first family's residences.

The Suharto family -- the elder Suharto and his six children -- have interconnecting houses in Jakarta's plush central suburb of Menteng.

It is believed that Tommy, 38, who has eluded arrest by police for more than two months, may be hiding out in one of the bunkers.

The billionaire former playboy businessman has been on the run since early November, when President Abdurrahman Wahid rejected his appeal for a pardon of a corruption conviction.

Another police source told the *Astaga.com* news service that several bunkers had been detected 15 metres (52 feet) below the ground.

"All the rooms are interconnected. Now we're trying to locate the door that leads into the bunkers," the unnamed source was quoted as saying.

## Madonna takes lessons to sound English

LONDON, Jan 12: Pop star Madonna is taking elocution lessons to develop an English accent, the *Independent* reported today, says AFP.

The move marks her increasing integration into British culture, according to the newspaper.

It follows the singer's marriage last month in a Scottish castle to British film director Guy Ritchie, with whom she has a home in London's fashionable Notting Hill district.

Patsy Rodenberg, senior voice coach at the National Theatre in London, told the *Independent* it could be a matter of weeks before Madonna sounds like an Englishwoman.

"It all depends on her ear. I imagine that given her background, she might be rather good."

Madonna's motive is that she wants to play British parts in films, the paper said.

# China, India must work together for world peace: Li Peng

## Sino-Indian friendship group to be set up

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: Li Peng, the second-highest ranking Chinese leader, kicked off talks with Indian politicians on Thursday by saying the world's most populous countries had to work together for global peace, reports AFP.

"China and India do not pose any threat to each other as they share similar views on a multi-polar world which both can play their roles for world peace and development," Li told Indian parliamentarians.

"It is China's consistent stand that a multi-polar world is better than a unipolar world. India has the potential to grow into a pole of its own."

New Delhi has consistently expressed concern over Chinese military assistance to Pakistan, India is making an effort to normalize

saying this had worsened tensions in the troubled subcontinent.

Li, however, told Indian MPs that there was no nuclear assistance to Pakistan, with whom Beijing has long-standing ties.

"There is traditional friendship between China and Pakistan which we are using for economic development," Li said.

Indian parliamentary speaker G.M. Balayogi told the Chinese leader that New Delhi was not engaged in "an arms race" and her nuclear tests in 1998 were "not directed against any country" but aimed at building a nuclear deterrent.

The nuclear tests caused a rift between the Asian giants.

In another sign both nations

relations, Li also announced that China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), would establish a Sino-Indian friendship group, the official Chinese Xinhua news agency reported.

The group would invite members of the corresponding lobby in the Indian parliament to visit China, Li said, the agency added.

Li also held talks with Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh on the disputed Sino-Indian border today and stressed the need to improve relations between the two Asian giants.

Singh held a 45-minute meeting with Li at his hotel suite.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Singh said: "We spoke of the need to promote future good relations between India and China which are two ancient civilisations."

When asked if the border issue -- the cause of a brief but bitter war in 1962 -- was discussed, he replied: "Yes, that was also a part of the discussions."

India says China still holds 40,000 square kilometres (16,000 square miles) of its territory in Kashmir, while Beijing lays claim to a wide swathe of territory in Arunachal Pradesh.



Chairman of China's National People's Congress Li Peng (C) introduces his wife Zhu Lin (R) to Indian opposition leader Sonia Gandhi prior to their talks yesterday.

-AFP photo

## Nepali police kill seven Maoist rebels

KATHMANDU, Jan 12: At least seven Maoists, including a woman cadre, were killed in a clash with Nepalese police, officials said today, reports AFP.

"About seven insurgents were killed in the armed encounter between the rebels and police. Police later recovered arms, explosives and 15 homemade bombs belonging to the Maoists," a home ministry spokesman said.

One policeman was injured in the incident which took place at Phukot village in Kalikot district, 380 km northwest of the capital, the spokesman said.

According to sources, the Maoists had prohibited people from entering the village Thursday morning, claiming it belonged to their "Liberation Area."

In an immediate response police raided the area and fired at a group of around 80 Maoist insurgents, the source said.

## 'No breakthrough' in Israel-PA talks

### Tel Aviv allows Gaza airport's limited reopening

GAZA CITY, Jan 12: A marathon meeting between Israeli and Palestinian officials ended early today with no breakthrough towards peace but an agreement to keep talking despite continued wide differences, both sides said, reports AFP.

"There was an agreement to hold meetings over the next two consecutive days," Palestinian negotiator Yasser Arafat told Voice of Palestine Radio after the talks at the Erez crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel.

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat told reporters that the negotiations would resume late Saturday.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's security adviser Danny Yatom told Israeli army radio there had been no breakthrough, but said this had not been expected, given the wide differences between the two sides.

"At least the negotiations were

not disastrous," Yatom said.

US President Bill Clinton's peace proposals were centre stage during the more than five-hour meeting of senior Israeli and Palestinian officials.

The Israeli delegation at Erez consisted of Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben Ami, Tourism and Transport Minister Amnon Lipkin-Shahak and Gilad Sher, Barak's chief of staff.

The Palestinian side was represented by Ahmad Qorei, head of the Palestinian legislative council, top negotiator Saeb Erekat, Arafat and Gaza Strip preventative security chief Mohammad Dahlan.

The Clinton proposals call for Palestinian sovereignty over the Arab quarters of east Jerusalem and over the al-Aqsa mosque compound, as well as all of the Gaza Strip and 95 per cent of the West Bank.

In exchange for that, the Palestinians are being asked to renounce demands for a right to

return to their homes in what is now Israel of an estimated 3.7 million refugees.

Meanwhile, the Israeli Army, which on Thursday began to lift some restrictions imposed on the Palestinian territories, allowed the Palestinian airport in the Gaza Strip to reopen for six hours a day on Friday.

But the facility's general director told AFP this was not enough.

"The airport was opened today from 1000 (14:00 BST) to 1600 (20:00 BST)," Salman Abu Halib said.

"The airport must be open 24 hours a day and this is a dangerous violation. We ask the Israeli side to lift totally its restriction on the airport," he added.

The airport has been closed and reopened by Israel, which is responsible for security at the facility, several times since the start of the Intifada, or Palestinian uprising, more than three months ago.



Sri Lankan troops guard a government building on Thursday in the northern Jaffna Peninsula where a poster denouncing recruitment of children by Tamil Tiger rebels is displayed. Government forces launched a series of operations against Tamil Tiger rebels last month and re-took areas lost to the guerrillas early last year.

## Norway envoy fails to break Lankan peace deadlock

COLOMBO, Jan 12: Norway's special envoy, Erik Solheim, left Colombo today after fresh talks with Sri Lankan leaders, but failed to revive the island's peace process, officials said, reports AFP.

Solheim on Thursday night met with President Chandrika Kumaratunga who made it clear that there would be no truce as demanded by the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) before peace talks could begin, officials said.

"They had an encouraging discussion on the ongoing process of negotiations with the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) before peace talks could begin," the foreign ministry said.

"In the meantime, there will be no ceasefire."

The foreign ministry said Solheim, who ended a brief two-

day visit Friday, was expected to hold further talks with the Tamil Tiger rebels and thereafter with the Colombo government.

Norway has been acting as a facilitator to bring the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government to the negotiating table for nearly two years. However, there has been no direct meeting between the two sides.

The LTTE declared a ceasefire from December 25 and urged the government to do the same to clear the way for talks. The government maintains that talks should precede any truce, a position reiterated to Solheim.

Solheim also met with Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramayagama who is advocating a hard-line against the LTTE and has been dismissive of attempts to talk peace with the Tigers.

The prime minister was

quoted as saying in the Lakkima newspaper that during a 45-minute meeting with Solheim and the Norwegian ambassador here, Jon Westborg, they did not discuss Norway's attempts to broker peace in Sri Lanka.

The prime minister said he spoke only with the Norwegian ambassador and uttered a "thank you" to Solheim when he was leaving.

Sri Lanka's Trade Minister Rauf Hakeem, who met with Solheim on Wednesday, said both the government and the Tigers were losing sight of the main objective of ending the war.

Hakeem, who represents a minority Muslim party in Kumaratunga's shaky coalition government, said he hoped there could be eventual peace talks exploiting the "window of opportunity" opened by Solheim.

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In December, scores of civil servants skipped work and cheered at an opposition rally outside a complex where government departments are housed in Kuala Lumpur.

In his speech, Mahathir took a customary swipe at the West, saying Malaysia would have to give up pro-Malay affirmative action and "become slaves" if foreigners gain control of the economy, still suffering from the 1997-98 Asian crisis, in the name of globalisation.

If it is allowed to fester, the first evidence of our country cracking and collapse will show rapidly," Mahathir said. "We can fall in two to three years."

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