



From left: Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, presidents of Turkey Ahmet Necdet Sezer, Russian Vladimir Putin, Kazakh Nursultan Nazarbayev, Chinese Jiang Zemin and Pakistani Pervez Musharraf pose for a family picture on Tuesday during the Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Almaty.

Almaty conference adopts anti-terror declaration

AFP, Almaty

A 16-nation Asian summit including India and Pakistan adopted Tuesday in Kazakhstan the Almaty Act which condemns terrorism and commits its signatories to not support separatist movements. The act approved by the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) "condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and any support or acceptance of it and the failure to condemn it directly." India accuses Pakistan of promoting cross-border terrorism in support of separatists in Kashmir. The 16 signatories are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Palestine, Russia,

Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. The Act identifies "separatism as one of the main threats and challenges to security and stability" in the region. "Member states will not support any separatist movement on the territory of another member state," the text says, noting that the CICA signatories "will unite their efforts to prevent terrorism either being prepared, launched and financed from the territory of a state, and we refuse to offer protection or a home to terrorists." The Act also recognises the rights of "peoples living under foreign occupation" but bars member countries from backing separatist movements acting on the territory of other CICA members. Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said earlier Tuesday that

the "epicentre of terrorism and religious extremism" was close to India's borders, implicitly accusing Pakistan in his statement. Musharraf told the conference that although "we cannot allow individual or group terrorism," at the same time "we cannot condone for any reason the rapacious policies of certain states that forcibly occupy territories and deny freedom to peoples for decades on end" -- a reference to Kashmir. The CICA was conceived in 1992 as a forum for discussing regional stability and security with an emphasis on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. The Almaty meeting is the first to be attended by members' heads of state and government.

South Asia paying the price for Kashmir stand-off: Musharraf

AFP, Almaty

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf said Tuesday the people of South Asia are paying the price for what he termed India's unwillingness to end the stand-off over disputed Kashmir. "The people of South Asia continue to pay a very heavy price by the refusal of India to resolve the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people," Musharraf said, sitting at the same table as Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee at a regional summit in Kazakhstan. The summit, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence building in Asia (CICA), has been overshadowed by the threat of war between the two nuclear-armed neighbours. Tension between the two countries has been running high since an attack on Delhi's parliament in December which India blamed on Pakistan-based militants. The hostility flared again after a bloody militant attack in Kashmir last month which India blamed on Pakistan. "For the past several months, tension along our borders with India and the Line of Control (the de facto border which divides Kashmir between India and Pakistan) is high, stirring deep fears in South Asia and around the world over the real possibility of conflict," the president said. "We do not want war. We will not initiate a war. But if war is imposed on us, we will defend ourselves with the utmost resolution and determination," he said. "We have stated repeatedly that instead of accusations, threats and

dangerous escalation, India should return to the path of dialogue and negotiations, which is the only sane option, especially in the dangerous environment of South Asia." Musharraf has repeatedly said he is open to talks, but India has ruled out dialogue until what it says is "cross-border terrorism" ends. It accuses Pakistan of arming and funding militants who cross from Pakistan-administered Kashmir into the Indian zone and carry out attacks against Indian security forces. Islamabad denies the charge but says it supports the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination. Many of the 16 leaders gathered for the CICA summit, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Ziang Jemin, spoke of the necessity of the fight against terrorism. In his address Musharraf said state oppression could lead to terrorism. "We cannot allow individual or group terrorism on any pretext. Similarly we cannot condone for any reason the rapacious policies of certain states that forcibly occupy territories and deny freedom to peoples for decades on end," he said. "Global peace has remained hostage to the expansionist ambitions of such states and their ruthless campaigns to suppress, through brutal use of force, the legitimate struggles of people to gain their internationally recognised fundamental right to freedom and self determination. "Terrorism by states, apart from inflicting massive suffering on occupied people, spawns a spiral of violence and terrorism."

Attack on Thai school bus: 2 students killed

AFP, Bangkok

At least two students were killed Tuesday and 13 others injured, four critically, as gun-wielding assailants attacked a school bus in Thailand near the Myanmar border, senior Thai officials and doctors said. Three unidentified assailants armed with M-16 rifles shot at the bus, which was carrying more than 20 students to Ban Kha Wittaya secondary school, in Ban Kha district of Ratchaburi province, 100 kilometres southwest of the capital Bangkok. "There were two students killed, a boy and a girl, and all the injured are now at the Suan Phueng and Ratchaburi hospitals," Interior Minister Purachai Piemsomboon told reporters. The bus was attacked at 7:30 am (0030 GMT) as the children, reportedly ages 12 to 17, were on their way to school, Thai education officials said.

Musharraf may meet Benazir, Sharif soon

IANs, Islamabad

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf may meet former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif during his visits to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over the weekend, a media report says. A report in the Nawa-e-Waqt, an Urdu daily, on Tuesday said Musharraf was considering contact with the exiled leaders of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League (PML) on his visit to Riyadh and Abu Dhabi June 8-9 but it would be subject to many "ifs and buts". It said the possibility of the meetings was dependent on outcome of the ongoing regional conference at Almaty, Kazakhstan. Confirming the dates of the president's visits to these countries, a senior official declined to comment on reports that the trip was aimed at meeting the leaders of Pakistan's two major political parties. "I don't know about the agenda of the visits," the official told IANs. "These visits were scheduled recently and are part of Pakistan's plan to brief the world leaders on the current tension between India and Pakistan." Bhutto, who heads the PPP, has been in self-imposed exile since April 1999 and faces corruption charges in several criminal cases. Sharif, who heads his factions of the PML, along with his family was sent into exile to Saudi Arabia in December 2000 after a deal with the military government. Sharif denies any such deal. The visit is being seen in the context of Musharraf's diplomatic initiative to rally support from Muslim and Western states at a time when influential Western powers are asking Pakistan to stop infiltrations into Kashmir.

'Nuclear war means little to ignorant Pakistanis'

AFP, Islamabad

The phrase "nuclear war" is enough to make any Westerner shudder, but ordinary Pakistanis are not afraid because they don't understand what it means, according to experts here. "The people are not afraid because of simple ignorance of what nuclear war means," said Pervez Hoodbhoy, a renowned nuclear expert from Islamabad's Quaid-e-Azam University. "They know it's a big bomb but they don't seem to realise how big a bomb it is or what its after-effects are." "Even my students don't know what a fireball is. They don't know about the effects of radioactivity and they don't know about the long-term effects of nuclear weapons."

His comments were made as an anxious world prays some of its most influential diplomats will be able to pull nuclear-armed India and Pakistan back from the brink of a brewing war. Thousands of foreign workers, embassy staff and UN families have pulled out of the two countries as the threat grows of all-out conflict over the disputed territory of Kashmir. But Pakistanis on the street, armed with a strong Muslim faith, traditional fatalism and fierce nationalism, are carrying on very much as usual. "Both India and Pakistan are traditional societies where the role of fate, of events being guided from outside them, reduce the will to try and change things through human volition," Hoodbhoy told a weekend conference on averting war with

India. "It's amazing that although we are on the verge of war hardly anyone is scared over here. Should the slightest indication have been that something nuclear was going to happen in Europe, half the population would be on the streets." A trip around sleepy Islamabad seems to back the professor up. Tea-sipping carpet-sellers and strolling shoppers in one of the capital's main markets could not have looked less worried. "There is no panic," Quaid Jadoon, an out-of-work geologist in his 20s, said during a weekend shopping trip. "It is not so much tense here. Everybody is going about their daily movement of life."

Japan ratifies Kyoto Protocol Australia under pressure to back pact

AFP, Tokyo

Japan on Tuesday ratified the Kyoto Protocol, making it the 73rd signatory to the UN pact aimed at fighting global warming which the United States has rejected. The cabinet Tuesday approved documents to ratify the accord after the upper house of parliament voted 229-0 vote in favour of it on Friday. The documents will now be submitted to United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan later in the day, a statement said. With Japan on firmly on board, the accord has now won support from countries responsible for 36 percent of the 1990 level of global greenhouse gas emissions. But that still falls short of the 55 percent threshold required for the pact to take effect, Japanese offi-

cial said. Countries supporting the protocol have been pushing for that target to be met before the world summit on sustainable development, which begins in Johannesburg on August 26. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi called in the statement for US participation to help fight the emissions of greenhouse gases blamed for global warming, even though Washington opted out of the pact in March 2001. "The government of Japan will do its utmost to establish a common rule, in which all countries including the United States and the developing countries participate," he said. In a report submitted to the United Nations over the weekend, the United States for the first time recognized that global warming is

caused to a great degree by human activity, particularly the burning of fossil fuels, but refused to shift its position on the Kyoto pact. Meanwhile, Australia was under renewed pressure Tuesday to commit to the Kyoto Protocol on climate change after the European Union decided last week to ratify the pact to combat global warming. The pact requires industrialised countries -- with the exception of the United States, which walked away from the Kyoto accord in March 2001 -- to cut their emissions of greenhouse gases to below 1990 levels by 2008-2012. Australia has so far followed the US lead with Prime Minister John Howard arguing the protocol could not function without the US, or restrictions on developing nations to curb greenhouse gases.

Pomp & pageantry for jubilee finale

REUTERS, London

A grand display of pomp and pageantry winds up a four-day party celebrating the Queen's 50 years on the throne. A day after rock and pop stars paid tribute to the 76-year-old monarch with a deafening concert in the normally sedate grounds of Buckingham Palace, the queen was preparing for a more traditional ceremonial procession through the streets of London in a magnificent gilded carriage. "We feel proud of you; proud and grateful for everything you have done for your country and the Commonwealth over 50 extraordinary years," her son and heir Prince Charles said in an emotional tribute after Monday night's "Party at the Palace".

The concert, watched by more than a million people on the streets and parks outside the palace and millions more on television, was a high point in the four-day Golden Jubilee celebrations which have seen a resurgence of royal fervour and patriotism sweep through the country. Red, white and blue bunting festooned thousands of street parties held around the country on Sunday and Monday, recalling a bygone era when monarchy stood at the centre of British life. "If outsiders want to know what sort of people we really are, the last 24 hours will have provided plenty of pointers," said the Daily Mail newspaper in its editorial. "In many ways this was Britain as its very best."



Rod Stewart (L), Ozzy Osbourne (2nd L) with Cliff Richard (2nd R) and Paul McCartney (R) sing together during "Party at the Palace" in London on Monday night. Former Spice Girl Emma Bunton on stage in the gardens of Buckingham Palace for the second concert to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II.

CIA creates secret hit team to target terrorists abroad

AFP, Washington

The US Central Intelligence Agency has created a new super secret paramilitary unit to target known terrorists and their leaders abroad, a US government official disclosed late Monday. The CIA already has several paramilitary units trained for the conduct of covert operations, according to the official. But the new hit team will operate directly under the command of the agency's counter terrorism center, the brain trust of the US-led war on terror that seeks to eradicate terrorist cells around the world. "It will really be a more counter terrorist paramilitary force that will focus on terrorists," the official said.

The number of people in the team, its weaponry and the location of its home base remain highly classified. The move comes as US and allied forces are stepping up operations along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan to hunt down remnants of the deposed Taliban regime and al-Qaida terror network blamed for the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States. US President George W. Bush has repeatedly stated he wants al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden "dead or alive." But so far, the Saudi-born extremist has eluded not only capture but even sightings. "He is believed to be alive and hiding somewhere in the region

along the Afghan-Pakistani border," the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told AFP. But the official declined to comment on whether the new team of highly-trained and experienced CIA commandos was to be thrown into action, if US intelligence got "actionable" information about the whereabouts of bin Laden or his closest associates. The Federal Bureau of Investigation's list of most wanted terrorists currently contains 22 names, including bin Laden and his presumed right-hand man and chief strategist, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad.

Indo-Pak war fears cloud EU-Asia meeting

AFP, Brussels

Fears that India and Pakistan may go to war are likely to loom large when EU and East Asian foreign ministers meet Thursday and Friday in the Spanish capital Madrid. India and Pakistan are not part of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process, which brings together the 15 EU members states, the European Commission and 10 East Asian nations including Japan and China. But the three-day meeting in Madrid -- called to prepare an ASEM summit in Copenhagen on September 22-24 -- is expected to dwell in part on the tension between the two nuclear-armed states. Officials in Brussels say the foreign ministers will also look at

illegal immigration, globalisation, sustainable development, and the situation in Afghanistan, the Korean peninsula and the Middle East. Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Pique, whose country is winding up its turn at the rotating EU presidency, underscored Europe's concern over Kashmir when he advised citizens to steer clear of South Asia. "At this time, the risk is unfortunately very high," said Pique, as he warned Monday of the "extraordinary seriousness" of a nuclear conflict. Echoing a position taken by EU foreign ministers at their April meeting in Luxembourg, Pique called upon New Delhi and Islamabad to open discussions.

Global warming causes oceans to lose oxygen

AFP, Washington

Global warming is causing oceans to lose oxygen, a process that is expected to continue over the next several decades, according to a study due to be published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Tuesday. The study, by Ralph Keeling of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California at San Diego and Hernan Garcia of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, insists that the loss begins when higher atmospheric temperatures heat only the upper layer of the ocean. Indonesia's new army chief vows to stay away from politics



A Palestinian woman mourns the destruction of her family home by the Israeli army on Tuesday at the Balata refugee camp in the West Bank city of Nablus, that has been occupied for a fifth day. Since its massive five-week crackdown in the West Bank launched on March 29 the Israeli army makes almost daily incursions into self-rule Palestinian areas to round up suspected militants.

'US vows to eliminate al-Qaida in Pakistan'

AFP, Kabul

The United States is determined to eliminate al-Qaida forces in Pakistan with the same "dedication" as it fought the terror network in Afghanistan, the US president's special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad said Tuesday. "The elimination of al-Qaida in Pakistan is as important as the elimination of al-Qaida has been in Afghanistan," said Khalilzad, the US special envoy for Afghanistan. "I know that that is the president's objective and I believe that we would do so. Pakistan cannot be a refuge for al-Qaida -- whether its members or leaders," he told a press conference. Khalilzad said it was important for the United States to wipe out the "remains of al-Qaida that is in Pakistan, whether in Waziristan or elsewhere ... with the same dedication and resolve that we are dealing with here." Hundreds of al-Qaida and Taliban forces are feared to have crossed into Pakistan in the aftermath of the massive US-led Operation Anaconda in March, which saw the fiercest fighting of the Afghan campaign. While the Americans claim to have wiped out al-Qaida's middle-ranking leadership during Operation Anaconda, senior figures including the network's supremo Osama bin Laden remain at large.

Indonesia's new army chief vows to stay away from politics

AFP, Jakarta

The new chief of Indonesia's powerful army said Tuesday he will stay away from politics and will only focus on maintaining the country's unity. "I have never liked to take part in politics. My notion of politics is politics of the state ... and that is to protect the Unitary State of Indonesia from being interfered with and from disunity," Lieutenant General Ryamizard Ryaucudu told reporters. President Megawati Sukarnoputri swore in Ryaucudu on Tuesday morning. He replaces General Endriartono Sutarto, who has been promoted to head the entire armed forces.