



PHOTO: AFP
Bavarian Premier Edmund Stoiber (L) greets Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Thursday in front of the Bavarian Parliament in Munich. Vajpayee arrived in Germany two days ago starting a week-long tour of Germany, Russia and France, where he is to attend a meeting of Group of Eight (G8) industrialised countries and 12 developing nations.

US extends full support to Vajpayee's peace initiative

ANI, Washington

Words of praise from the American President await Prime Minister Vajpayee at Avian when the leaders of the G-8 and the special invitees get together to reflect on World affairs especially developments in Postwar Iraq.

The US administration has expressed full support for the peace initiative that India has undertaken in Kashmir with the offer of talks to Pakistan.

US sources here are specifically focused on the fact that despite a number of provocations, India has not substantively changed its position from the Prime Minister's offer of peace to Pakistan as announced in Srinagar in the third week of April.

While there is no formal meeting planned between President Bush and Prime Minister Vajpayee, the two leaders will get a chance to

exchange a few words during the course of the summit. It is understood from sources close to the administration that the President will express his support and appreciation to the Indian Prime Minister for the peace moves that he has undertaken with Pakistan.

The administration is well aware that violence in Jammu and Kashmir continues unabated.

Infiltration levels are again going up and just this week the Indian Army fought a major counter-terrorist battle at Surankote in the Doda district where over a hundred Pakistani militants from the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) had entrenched themselves. The Army operation led to the killing of as many as 62 militants and the diaries found on their person confirmed the Pakistan link.

Despite the provocations and especially the Surankote incident

which many analysts are referring to as a "mini Kargil" the Indian Prime Minister has not deviated from the path he announced at Srinagar and this has gone down very well with the administration.

"India's patience and determination to deal with terrorism have won New Delhi high marks in Washington," commented a US source and it is this thought process which the President will pass along to Vajpayee at Avian.

As things stand the US is not about to present a "roadmap" on Kashmir to the India either now or in the foreseeable future. The administration is glad that New Delhi seems to have partially accepted Pakistan's reasoning that cross-border infiltration is not totally of its doing but that individual groups with their own agenda were at the forefront of the infiltration.

She, however, said "in spite of these glaring contradictions" the party has extended its "broad and sustained support" to the Centre on matters of national security, cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and on Indo-Pak ties.

Pakistan bars Jaish chief from addressing conference

AFP, Peshawar

Police on Friday prevented the leader of an outlawed militant group, accused of attacking India's parliament in 2001, from addressing a conference in northwest Pakistan, witnesses said.

It is the second time in less than a month that authorities have restricted the movements of Maulana Masood Azhar, who headed the now banned Jaish-e-Mohammad organisation of Islamic guerrillas fighting Indian rule in Kashmir.

The bar comes amid stepped-up pressure on Islamabad to take tougher action against militant groups in Kashmir to prove its commitment to peaceful dialogue with New Delhi.

The nuclear rivals are in the midst of a diplomatic thaw following a dangerous 17-month stand-off triggered by the Indian parliament attack.

LTTE rejects govt peace plan

Chandrika's party slams Norway as 'salmon-eaters'

REUTERS, AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels on Friday rejected a government proposal for restarting the island's stalled peace process with a hard-line letter that cast more doubt on the future of the peace deal.

The Tigers said the proposal from Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe did not meet their demands for speeding up work normalising life in Tamil areas hit by two decades of war.

The slow pace of humanitarian efforts was the reason the rebels gave last month when they suspended peace talks to end the war that has killed 64,000 and pulled out of a donor conference in Tokyo.

"The leadership of our liberation movement regrets to inform you that the new proposal submitted by your government for our perusal is unacceptable to us," said a letter from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to

Wickremesinghe.

The four-page letter did not mention the donor conference that is being held in just over a week in Tokyo that will raise an expected \$3 billion over three years to rebuild Sri Lanka.

Japan has already said the donor conference would go ahead even if the Tigers boycotted it.

Wickremesinghe had proposed setting up a development body to oversee the aid work in a bid to get the Tigers to attend the conference.

The rebels have been demand-

ing that an interim administration be set up in the Tamil-dominated north and east of the island, but Wickremesinghe said that was illegal.

"You have proposed a development-orientated structure with extremely limited administrative powers in which the participatory role of the LTTE is not clearly defined, or rather, left deliberately ambiguous," the letter said.

AFP adds: Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga's party Friday launched a scathing attack on peace broker Norway, saying

they were a "nation of salmon-eaters who have become international busybodies."

A top aide of Kumaratunga said her party condemned a suggestion by Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik that she was not involved in the peace bid.

"The Norwegian prime minister has not shown any sensitivity to the feelings of Sri Lankans," Samaraweera told reporters here. "Of course we can't expect anything better from a nation of salmon-eaters who turned into international busybodies."

Delhi's Pak policy lacks clarity: Sonia

PTI, Srinagar

There can and will be no compromise in our determination to defeat terrorism. The Congress position has all along been unwavering," she said.

The Congress has all along believed that the doors of diplomacy and windows of dialogue with Pakistan should always be kept open and active, she said, adding "cooperation, collaboration and contact across political, economic, cultural, educational, sporting and other fronts must be fostered and kept going."

"We were attacked bitterly for this position by BJP during recent assembly election campaigns but we have been steadfast in our principled stand. We have been vindicated," she said.

The Congress chief said elections to the five state assemblies will be held in about six months from now. We are in power in four of these five states, she said.

"We will continue to do so.



PHOTO: AFP
A South Korean rescue team works at the site of a derailed train in Daejeon, 165 km south of Seoul on Friday. More than 10 people were injured when the South Korean passenger train derailed after steel and concrete slabs fell from a half-demolished bridge.

US planning to boost troop levels in SE Asia

THE STRAITS TIMES, Washington

reflect the reality of a post-Cold War and post-Sept 11 world.

For instance, there is less reason now to have massive bases in South Korea and Japan - where more than 70 per cent of the 100,000 US troops in East Asia are to be found - with the passing of the 'Red China' Cold War threat.

Another key factor is the fear of terrorist attacks on US interests, which could be launched anywhere.

So the current thinking is to relocate US forces away from major concentrations to smaller, more mobile units that can be deployed rapidly to counter terrorist threats globally.

But putting the plan into practice will be difficult, not least having to surmount the political hurdles in places like the Philippines, where the closure of the former Subic Bay and Clark bases were a result, in part, of strong anti-American feeling.



PHOTO: AFP

An Indian policewoman officer charges baton at Myanmar refugees during a demonstration in front of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in New Delhi on Friday. About 250 Burmese refugees and students demonstrated to demand the immediate withdrawal of a 30 per cent cut of the Subsistence Allowance.