



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 Post war 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 terrorism battle at Surankote in the Doda district where over a hundred Pakistani militants from the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and the Lashkar-e-Toiba (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.

## 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 drive.

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

Alleging that the BJP-led NDA government's Pakistan policy "lacked clarity, consistency and conviction", Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Friday asserted there will be no compromise on her party's determination to defeat terrorism.

"The BJP-led NDA government's policy on Pakistan has lacked clarity, consistency and conviction. The central government's stand has vacillated from one extreme to another," Gandhi said in her opening remarks at the first ever Congress Chief Ministers' conclave here.

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.

"We will continue to do so.

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.

# US halts tech smuggling plots to Pakistan

AP, Washington

Three times in the past month, the US government has uncovered illicit efforts to smuggle sensitive military or nuclear technology out of the United States to Pakistan, one of America's key partners in the war on terror.

One of the cases resulted from an anonymous tipster reaching out to US authorities because of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The tension between India and Pakistan creates a complicated relationship with the United States and other Western nations.

Economic sanctions imposed by the West against India and Pakistan after recent nuclear tests have been gradually lifted as both nations joined the international campaign against the al-Qaeda terror network and the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001.

In the latest prosecution, a suburban Chicago woman was charged Thursday with lying to federal agents about her efforts to send to Pakistan components for remote-controlled aircraft capable of delivering 220-pound payloads. Such aircraft are often used for battleground surveillance of enemy troops.

According to the court papers, Mariam Aidroos worked with an

unnamed man who visited the United States as early as 1996 identifying himself as a radio-controlled contractor for the Pakistan military. Aidroos allegedly gave a false description of the contents of materials destined for Pakistan.

Unlike the Chicago case in which the shipments were blocked, there are cases in which authorities have not recovered equipment sent to Pakistan that US officials fear could be used for nuclear devices.

A Connecticut engineering company and its chief financial officer pleaded guilty a month ago to violating the International Emergency Economic Powers Act and the Export Administration Act. The financial officer faces up to 10 years in prison.

In a license application rejected by the Bush administration, the Connecticut company said the equipment was destined for a Pakistani development centre which prosecutors say was controlled by the Pakistani government. Despite the rejection, the Connecticut company shipped the items anyway, routing them through a third country.

The Bush administration restricts the export of munitions and other materials through strict licensing procedures.

The Commerce Department and US Customs officials were notified about the shipment by an anonymous letter sent immediately after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, by a writer citing the attacks as the motive that prompted him to act.

"Those who illegally export sensitive US technology, especially technology with potential nuclear application, are putting this country at serious risk," Homeland Security Department official Michael Garcia said at the time of the guilty plea. All three of the latest cases were investigated by the bureau of immigration and customs enforcement, or ICE, which is headed by Garcia.

Not only exotic high-tech devices are being smuggled.

In a case involving conventional arms, a Middle Eastern couple is accused in a new indictment of conspiring with two companies to send parts for military radar, armoured personnel carriers and howitzers to Pakistan.

The woman, a Jordanian national, allegedly travelled to Connecticut previously to establish relationships with military suppliers and she had planned to meet with several defence contractors when agents from the bureau of immigration and customs enforcement arrested her.

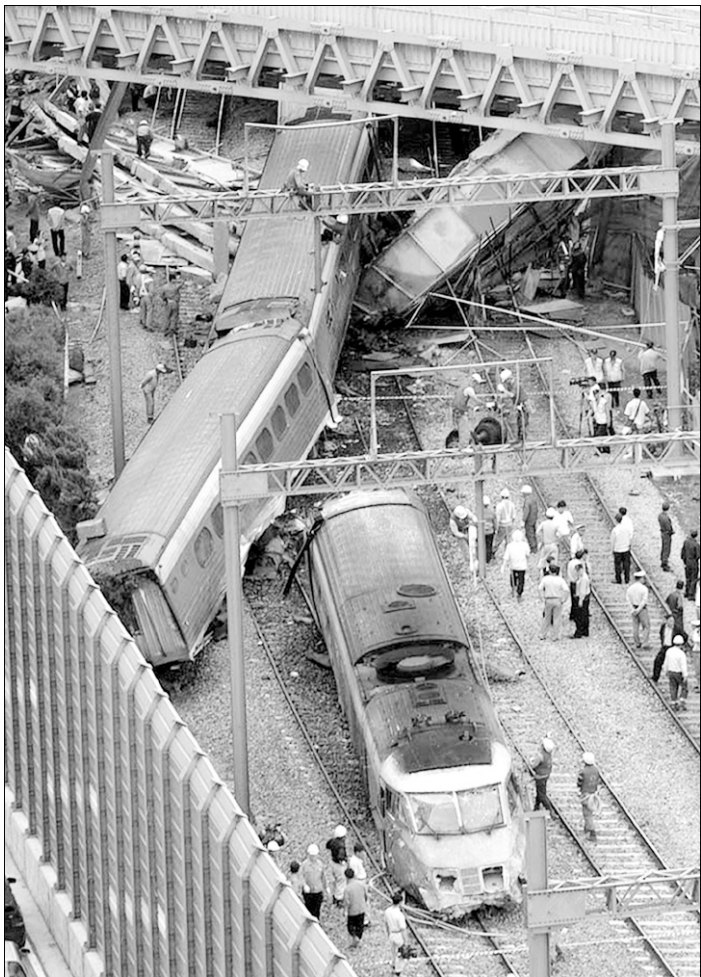


PHOTO: AFP

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

Radical moves are afoot to reposition American troops in East Asia, say top officials in the United States Defence Department.

The plan involves relocating, or even closing, bases in Japan and South Korea, while boosting troop levels in Australia, Singapore and the Philippines.

Also under consideration is a plan to seek an agreement to base US Navy ships in Vietnamese waters, reported the Los Angeles Times, citing senior administration officials.

Under the proposed realignment of forces, US troops now massed in Korea and Japan would be shifted to a network of smaller facilities in the region, in countries such as Australia, Singapore and Malaysia.

Several reasons are given for the changes, premised on a need to have troop deployment better

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.