

SEPARATISTS SAY

Pak involvement vital to talks on Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

The involvement of Pakistan is essential in talks between separatists and the Indian government on the future of Kashmir...

Farooq's faction of the region's main separatist alliance, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference...

The separatists have balked at reviving the talks with Singh's government...

His comments mark the first time either side has made public the basis...

for their ongoing dialogue, although Kashmir watchers doubt that the former government would have agreed to Pakistan's direct involvement.

Farooq's faction of the region's main separatist alliance, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, held two rounds of talks with the previous Hindu-nationalist government...

The separatists have balked at reviving the talks with Singh's government, which came into power after winning May general elections...

"We want to reiterate that on these three principles Hurriyat wants to take the dialogue process forward," said Farooq...

He said Singh's offer of unconditional talks during his visit to Kashmir...

mosque.

"Now it is up to the government of India whether it wants to accept these principles and resolve the issue through talks or it wants to take some other course," said Farooq...

He said Singh's offer of unconditional talks during his visit to Kashmir...

"There should be a formal invitation as (per) the previous government," said Farooq...

Going to Pakistan is not a condition, it is a reality, it is a requirement," he said...

side of the border.

"Why can't Hurriyat and the militant leadership be allowed to talk? If you want resolution of the issue we will have to talk to the boys with the guns."

"If the government of India wants that we should first talk to New Delhi and later to Pakistan, we are even willing to discuss that," he said.

Farooq also said Pakistan's Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has invited them for talks when he visits New Delhi next week...

Musharraf late October floated a raft of proposals including demilitarisation, the carve-up of Kashmir...

Tigers blame Chandrika for talks deadlock

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels yesterday accused President Chandrika Kumaratunga of "deceit" as she gave the guerrillas two weeks to decide if they wanted to revive stalled peace negotiations.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said they had received no response to a request sent to Kumaratunga asking for a clear statement on her coalition government's stand on ending ethnic bloodshed.

The LTTE accused Kumaratunga of projecting the image of a peace maker to the international community while appealing her main Marxist coalition partner...

"This coalition that is showing different faces to suit the people, time and place has no intention of being involved in the peace process honestly," the LTTE said in a statement posted on its website.

It came a day after Kumaratunga asked the Tigers to return to the negotiating table they left in April last year...



Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (L) waves to the crowd as Chief Minister of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir Mufti Mohamed Sayeed (R) looks on during a rally in Jammu...

Buddhist principles should guide Indo-Pak ties: Natwar

AFP, New Delhi

Buddhist principles of "mutual respect and peaceful co-existence" should guide relations between India and Pakistan...

Singh urged Pakistan to embrace the Buddhist vision of peace enshrined in the Panchsheel treaty signed on April 29, 1954...

"What can be a better framework for furthering relations with...

Pakistan than the five principles of Panchsheel or peaceful co-existence," Singh said...

"Over the last year or so, both India and Pakistan have embarked on a process of confidence building, enhancing interaction and cooperation so as to create an atmosphere conducive to giving a firmer basis to the relationship."

"Needless to say, an end to the atmosphere of violence and terrorism would have to be an essential part of this process," he stressed.

India's Muslim-majority Kashmir state has been in the throes of an Islamic insurgency since 1989 that New Delhi accuses Pakistan of stoking. Islamabad denies the charge...

The violence has claimed about 40,000 lives though separatists say the toll is twice as high.

The South Asian rivals are about to enter a second phase of "composite dialogue" peace talks...

Sino-India border talks begin in Beijing

PTI, Beijing

India and China began a crucial round of boundary negotiations on a cordial note here today with both sides keen to find a "mutually acceptable" solution to the vexed issue.

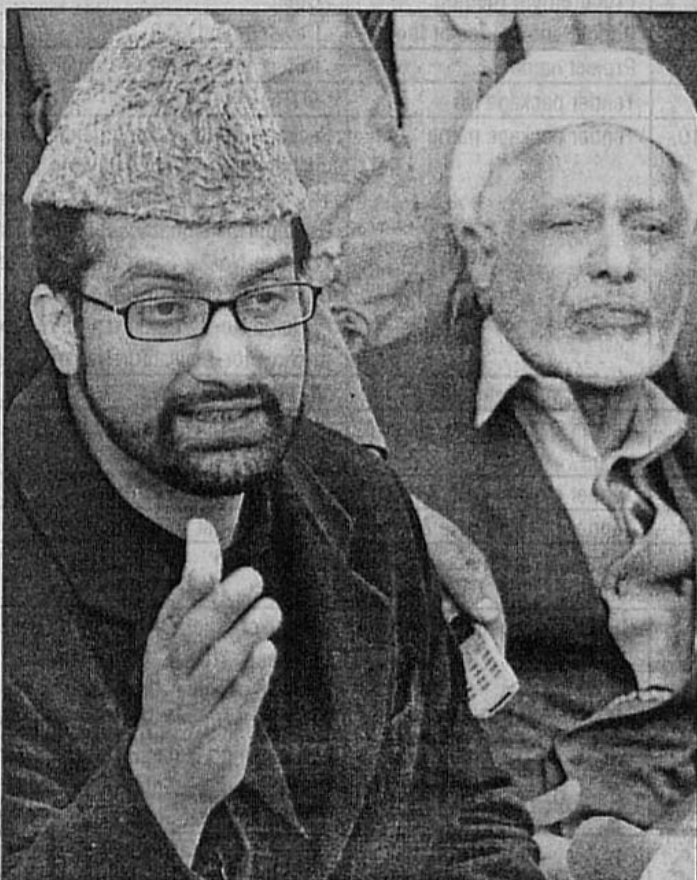
The fourth round of talks, at the level of Special Representatives, is being held between National Security Adviser J N Dixit and the Chinese Executive Vice-Foreign Minister and designated Special Representative, Dai Bingguo.

The in-camera parleys, being held at the leafy Diaoyutai State Guest House will last for at least two days, official sources said while being tight-lipped about the prospects of a breakthrough on the vexed issue.

Ahead of the meeting, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said the two sides will discuss the guiding principles to resolve the boundary issue.

This is the second time that both the countries are meeting after the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government assumed power in May. Dai earlier had two meetings with Dixit's predecessor, Brajesh Mishra.

On Friday, Dixit will call on Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, who is likely to visit India early next year.



Kashmiri separatist Mirwaiz Umar Farooq (L), head of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), gestures while addressing the press while former APHC chairman Mouvi Abbas Ansari looks on in Srinagar yesterday. Farooq said talks between Muslim separatists in Kashmir and India have to be unconditional, Kashmir-centric and should involve Pakistan.

8 cops, hundreds of rebels killed in Nepal

AFP, Kathmandu

At least eight policemen and hundreds of Maoists were believed to have been killed after the two sides clashed at Khaire Kholha in Banke district, far southwest, Wednesday evening, state-run radio and police said.

"At least eight armed police force personnel and hundreds of Maoists were believed to have been killed after the two sides clashed at Khaire Kholha (river) in Banke district Wednesday evening," police said.

"The bodies of eight policemen of the Armed Police Force (APF) have been recovered," the radio said. But it did not say whether the bodies of the rebels had also been found.

The number of bodies of rebels found after the clashes rarely tallies with the figure of dead given by the government.

The dead policemen included a police inspector. Some 21 security personnel were also missing after the incident.

A Maoist area vice commander, Nirmal, who used only one name, was also killed and 12 others injured. Police said a security force team was ambushed at Khaire Kholha near Banke along the Lamahi-Kohalpur highway this evening.

Police said the security team were attacked by the rebels when it

tried to reopen the highway closed by the insurgents. About a dozen security force personnel, who were injured in the clashes were airlifted to Nepalgunj, far southwest of Kathmandu, for treatment.

The clashes occurred after the rebels set off a landmine at Khaire Kholha targeting the security forces.

Police said the bridge over the Khaire Kholha was completely destroyed in the explosion.

Earlier eleven soldiers were killed in Nepal, five in a landmine blast near a blocked road close to the capital, while battles with Maoists elsewhere left scores of rebels dead, an army official said Tuesday.

The army officer, who declined to be identified, said in the past two days skirmishes and air strikes had killed at least 35 rebels while the army lost 11 soldiers and seven injured in the fighting.

Five soldiers were killed in the landmine blast and six during engagements in far southwest jungle areas.

"Our securitymen were moving near Bhagwanpur jungle area in Kailali district, when a fairly large number of Maoists attacked one of the four army units in which six soldiers were killed while seven others were injured," the official said.

Kyoto Protocol to take effect from Feb 16

AFP, Paris

The Kyoto Protocol to combat global warming will take effect from February 16, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) announced yesterday after Russia formally handed over its instrument of ratification.

"The protocol will become legally binding on its 128 Parties on February 16 2005," the UNFCCC said in a statement received here, released after Russia handed the document to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in Nairobi.

The Bonn-based UNFCCC, the offspring of the 1992 Rio Summit, is Kyoto's parent convention.

"A period of uncertainty has closed. Climate change is ready to take its place at the top of the global agenda," said Joke Waller-Hunter, executive secretary of the

UNFCCC's secretariat.

Russia's move removed a years-long question mark over the future of the landmark agreement, which aims to curb carbon gas pollution blamed for disturbing the Earth's climate system.

Kyoto's framework was agreed in 1997 but it took four years to agree its complex rulebook.

In 2001, the United States walked away from Kyoto, saying the cost for meeting its targets would be too high for the US economy, which is massively dependent on the fossil fuels that are at the source of the problem.

It also said Kyoto was unfair, because only industrialised nations -- and not fast-growing developing ones such as India and China -- have to make targeted emissions cuts under the pact's 2008-12 timeframe.

Waller-Hunter noted that only

four industrialised countries have yet to ratify the Kyoto Protocol -- Australia, Liechtenstein, Monaco and the United States.

Australia has followed America in saying that it will not ratify Kyoto. Together, those two countries account for more than a third of greenhouse gases emitted by the industrialised world.

"Reducing the risks of global warming will require the active engagement of the entire international community," Waller-Hunter warned.

"I urge the US and other major emitters without Kyoto targets to do their part by accelerating their national efforts to address climate change."

US abandonment stripped Kyoto of the world's biggest producer of carbon gases and left the treaty on the brink of collapse.

US offers \$1.2b arms package to Pakistan

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Washington

Pentagon has proposed a \$1.2 billion arms package to Pakistan, seen in Washington as a reward to Islamabad for its cooperation with the US in its global war on terror.

The arms proposal, being offered to Pakistan in more than 14 years, is the first significant arms sale to a US ally after President Bush's re-election. Pentagon has notified the US Congress of the proposal, which convened after its annual recess on Tuesday. The arms package, which must be approved by Congress, includes eight P-3C Orion surveillance aircraft, six Phalanx rapid fire guns for the Pakistan navy and more than 2,000 TOW 2 missiles for the army, according to Pentagon sources.

It does not include the F-16 fighter jets, which Pakistan has been very keen to acquire. Islamabad had asked the US for at least 18 of the

new F-16s.

Congress has 30 days to object or approve the proposed arms sales. But Congressional sources said the sale is expected to sail through smoothly as the Congress -- both the House and the Senate -- has a Republican majority.

The delivery of an earlier batch of 60 F-16s to Pakistan was suspended in 1990 due to the Pressler sanctions, which blocked the sale amid a controversy that Pakistan was clandestinely developing nuclear weapons.

The Pentagon has declined to either affirm or deny that Pakistan was still negotiating with the Bush administration over the request for F-16s.

Pentagon sources, however, said the issue of F-16 sales was periodically raised by the Pakistan government with the US but "there has been no decision at any level of the US government to provide F-16s to Pakistan."



Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra (C) drops his paper dove along with school children in a big basket outside the government house in Bangkok yesterday during a campaign for peace. Thaksin has called on the country's 62 million population each to make a paper dove to promote peace in the country's violence-wracked Muslim-majority south.

Apec ministers in talks on trade, terror

AFP, Santiago

Asia Pacific foreign and trade ministers opened a second day of talks here yesterday to give a push to world trade talks, work on fighting terrorism and try to rein in North Korea's nuclear ambitions. US Secretary of State Colin Powell, who arrived here Wednesday, joined in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation talks yesterday.

Pyongyang appears to be signalling a readiness to return to stalled multilateral talks instead of insisting on bilateral US-North Korea negotiations to resolve the crisis, Powell said Wednesday.

"We have seen a few signals coming out of North Korea where they said: 'No, we never insisted that it had to be solved in a bilateral way'. We will have to wait and see," Powell told reporters Wednesday as he travelled to Apec talks in Santiago.

If confirmed by Pyongyang, the new stance could jolt life back into multilateral talks seeking to

persuade North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

Three rounds of multilateral talks have taken place since the stand-off erupted in October 2002 bringing together the two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia and the United States in Beijing. All but North Korea are members of Apec.

The nuclear crisis in the Korean peninsula is not on the official Apec agenda of the 21 members' trade and foreign ministers, who wrap up two days of talks later Thursday in preparation for a weekend summit of the leaders to be joined by US President George W. Bush.

But Powell, on the first foreign trip since announcing his resignation Monday, said the United States expected to raise the stalemate in its own discussions here.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard, speaking before his departure for Chile, said it was vital Apec keep the fight against terror high on its agenda, citing September's bombing of the Australian embassy in Jakarta.

Tender Notice for Works. Table containing procurement details: 1. Ministry/Division: Ministry of Communication. 2. Agency: Department of Roads and Highways. 3. Procuring entity name: Executive Engineer, RHD, Bagerhat Road Division, Bagerhat. ... 20. Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional): Information for Applicant. 21. Eligibility of tenderer: Any individual(s) or firm(s) or JVCA who fulfil the qualifications criteria stipulated in the Tender Data Sheet (TDS) and other conditions of the tender. ... LOT INFORMATION: Lot No: One, Identification of Lot: Palasiding and bats dumping works at 26th KM of Rupsha-Fakhirhat-Bagerhat Road, Location: 26th KM, Tender security (amount in Tk.): 5000.00, Completion time: 15 days. ... PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS: 26. Name of official inviting tender: Quazi Mohammad Ali. 27. Designation of official inviting tender: Executive Engineer. 28. Address of official inviting tender: Bagerhat Road Division, Basabati, Bagerhat. 29. Contact details of official inviting tender: Tel No. 0468-62485, Fax: 0468-63224. 30. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders. DFP-26734-6/11/04 G-1091 Quazi Mohammad Ali Executive Engineer, RHD Road Division, Bagerhat