

MUSHARRAF WARNS

## Kashmir can 'erupt' again

The issue can't be resolved in a day, says Manmohan

PTI, INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf yesterday said that the Kashmir issue could not be brushed under the carpet and warned that it could erupt again in the future.

"We may be having very good relations now, I may be having very good relation with (Prime Minister) Manmohan Singh, but nobody is permanent in the world," the President, who escaped two assassination attempts last year, said in a meeting with members of the Editors' Guild of India at a breakfast meeting in New Delhi.

"If you don't resolve it (Kashmir), don't blame me for what happens after 10 or 15 years," he said.

"If we don't resolve, it may erupt at some time in the future. This is my earnest belief that unless we resolve

the dispute it can erupt again under different environment and under different leadership," he added.

Asserting that territorial disputes like Kashmir "cannot be resolved in one meeting", Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday said its ultimate resolution should be seen as part of a step-by-step process where the human dimension gets precedence over other things.

In an interaction with the Editors' Guild of India following the three-day visit of Musharraf, the Prime Minister said such issues are more amenable to resolution, if one looked at it more as a human problem than as a territorial problem.

He said both countries should give primacy to the human dimension of the Kashmir issue by removing restrictions on the movement of people, trade, investment and ideas. "Out of that will emerge a new

sense of interdependence that will force India and Pakistan to work together" to find a larger solution to the issue at some stage.

"Bureaucratic restrictions will not matter after some time," the Prime Minister said in outlining how he saw an eventual resolution of the problem. He said the momentum set forward by such cross-border movement could eventually lead to tackling of the territorial issues.

He said it was only through a step by step approach that new complementarities can be developed that would then encourage both sides to look for what the Joint Statement released on Monday calls a "final settlement" of the issue.

Musharraf's remarks were seen as a signal to India that he is the best bet to tackle the complex Kashmir issue and it should not be put on the backburner.

He said agreement meant nothing if the ideal environment was not there. "Therefore, we must go to resolve all issues, including the core issue of Kashmir."

While questions on Kashmir dominated the hour-long meeting, it was a considerably mellowed and more realistic Musharraf - compared to the cocky general who interacted with the editors ahead of the summit with then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Agra in July 2001 - who fielded the questions on Sunday.

Some analysts had attributed the failure of the Agra summit to Musharraf's press interaction, in which he sought to justify the violence in Jammu and Kashmir and described the terrorists as "freedom fighters."

This time there was only one reference to "freedom fighters" and that in a different context.



Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf (L) shakes hands with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh following a joint press conference in New Delhi Monday. Musharraf later wrapped up a landmark visit to India and left for the Philippines for a three-day state visit, officials said. Before leaving New Delhi, Musharraf and Singh in a joint statement agreed that the ongoing peace process between the two nuclear rivals was "irreversible" and pledged to increase transport links across divided Kashmir.

## Five terrorist outfits flay Musharraf

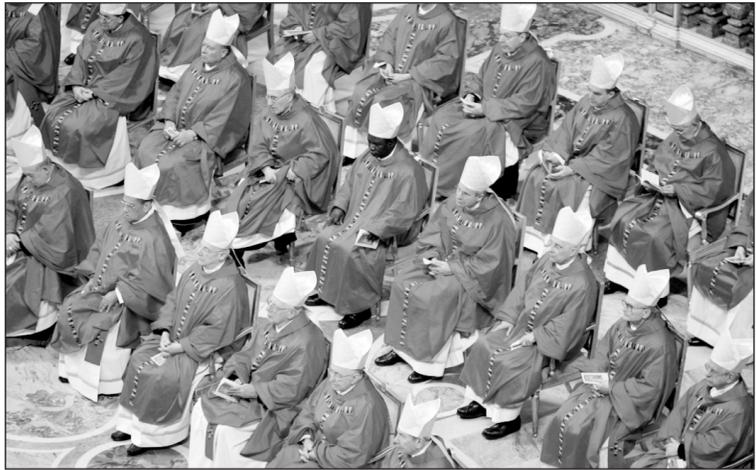
PTI, Srinagar

Five terrorist organisations yesterday accused Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf of surrendering before India and trading the Kashmir issue for monetary gains.

"The person, who is referred to as hero of Kargil war, has knelt before India. There is no precedent of such a meek surrender in the history of Pakistan," Samir Abdullah, joint spokesman of four terrorist outfits which carried out attacks on the inaugural Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, said in a statement in Srinagar.

Al-nasireen, Al-arifeen, Save Kashmir Movement and Farzandan-e-millat also lambasted Musharraf, accusing him of trading Kashmir issue for "trade, tourism and satanic culture".

"Musharraf did not display the straightforwardness that was evident during the Agra summit. As President of Pakistan, he should have worked towards granting the right to self-determination to people of Kashmir but he has failed to live up to the expectations," Chief of Jamiatul Mujahideen Shiekh Abdul Basit said in a separate statement.



Cardinals attend the special mass to elect Supreme Pontiff presided over by German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger at St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City Monday. Roman Catholic cardinals began a special mass Monday to invoke God's guidance before they convene in secret later in the day to elect a successor pope to John Paul II.

## Thousands flock to pray for 'right person' as next pope

AFP, Vatican City

Thousands of ordinary people and clergy flocked to Saint Peter's Basilica yesterday to help cardinals pray for divine guidance as they prepare to elect the next pope -- but everyone already seemed to have their minds made up.

"I really want an Italian," said Mario Colonna, a Roman pensioner, adding that he was hoping to see Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, former archbishop of Milan, or his successor Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi picked by the 115 cardinals who start the secret deliberations of the conclave Monday afternoon.

"Because the Church in Rome represents the whole world, it is natural that he be an Italian," he

said.

But his daughter Gilda disagreed. "If he represents the whole world, he doesn't need to be Italian. I want the Brazilian, to help the children there," she said, referring to Cardinal Claudio Hummes, archbishop of Sao Paulo.

Ten-year-old Francesca di Giansante said she was afraid the next pope would be African. "At school they said that if a black pope is elected, the sun will crash on Earth and it will be the end of the world."

Her mother has told her this was nonsense, but Father Martin of Germany, also attending the mass, noted that it would be difficult for Europeans to accept a non-European pope.

## Nepali king seeks to break out of isolation

REUTERS, Kathmandu

Nepal's King Gyanendra, denounced across the world for his Feb. 1 dismissal of the government and seizure of power, will seek to break out of his isolation during an Asian tour this week that includes China.

The 57-year-old monarch of the impoverished Himalayan kingdom was condemned by many nations for his power grab that also included detention of politicians, suspension of civil liberties and curbs on press freedom.

Neighbouring India as well as Britain have suspended arms aid to express their displeasure and Washington has slammed the takeover, which Gyanendra justified as vital to crush a Maoist revolt against the monarchy that has left over 11,000 people dead since

1996. Some EU nations, such as Denmark, have partially cut funds for economic projects in aid-dependent Nepal.

Gyanendra begins his nine-day foreign tour, his first since assuming full power, Wednesday, travelling to Indonesia to participate in the Asia-Africa summit on April 22-23. He goes to China on April 24 to attend the Boao Forum for Asia, dubbed the Asian equivalent of the World Economic Forum, on Hainan island.

"Obviously, the king will hold bilateral meetings with foreign leaders and explain the situation in the country. It is natural. But there is no specific agenda," a top foreign ministry official told Reuters Sunday.

Gyanendra will also travel to Singapore on April 26 and meet

President Sellapan Rama Nathan before returning home on April 29, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

In Jakarta, the king "is scheduled to meet heads of state or government and other leaders participating in the summit," the ministry said without giving details.

Officials were confident Gyanendra would meet Chinese President Hu Jintao during the tour, but an encounter with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who is also coming to the Indonesian summit, had not been fixed yet.

"We are exploring the possibility of a meeting with Singh," another official said.

India, which shares a 1,095-mile open border with Nepal, is worried that the Maoist insurgency might spill over into its territory.

## Israel moves to build new settlement

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel put itself on a collision course with Washington yesterday by inviting bids to build 50 new homes in the West Bank, just days after US President George W. Bush warned against any expansion of settlements.

Israel is mulling a three-week delay to the operation to pull settlers out of the Gaza Strip to avoid clashing with a Jewish mourning period, a source close to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said yesterday.

The head of the disengagement office, Jonathan Bassi, suggested at a cabinet meeting Sunday that the month-long operation, set to begin on July 20, be postponed to allow observant Jews to mourn the destruction of the second Jewish Temple.

Sharon was studying the proposal but was wary of agreeing to a delay, which could lead to disruption for pupils at the start of the new school year.

Yaakov Harel, a spokesman for the Israel Lands Authority, said a tender

had been issued for the construction work at the religious settlement of Elkana in the northern West Bank which is currently home to more than 3,250 people.

The houses "will be built by private entrepreneurs on state land," Harel told AFP.

The move was immediately denounced by the Israeli anti-settlement watchdog Peace Now as a clear violation of the government's commitments under a peace plan known as the roadmap.

## Iraqi forces retake besieged town

No sign of hostages, US soldier killed in explosion

AFP, Madain

The Iraqi army said yesterday it had found no hostages in the besieged town of Madain, where Sunni militants had reportedly been holding Shia residents captive.

A 1,500-strong Iraqi force moved into the town known both as Salman Pak and Madain, 30km southeast of Baghdad, according to an AFP correspondent embedded with the US military.

"The whole city is under control. We've secured houses where people said there were hostages. We could not find any. I don't think we'll find any," said Iraqi Brigadier General Mohammed Sabri Latif.

The military action followed reports that Sunni gunmen had abducted dozens of people and had threatened to kill them unless all Shias left the town, although details on the situation had been sketchy and contradictory.

"I think they (gunmen) ran away to the other side of the river. Possibly they took hostages with them. There are no signs of any killings," said Latif.

As the Iraqi forces moved in, the streets were deserted, shops shuttered and most of the town's some 7,000 residents were hiding inside their homes fearing a military offensive.

"They (militants) have either left or just laying low," said US Lieutenant Colonel Michael Johnson. "The Iraqis have secured most of the town, from here on there will be a police presence in Salman Pak."

Johnson said Iraqi forces were pushing south of the town along the Tigris to sweep through villages in the region.

Meanwhile, a US soldier was killed and another wounded in a bomb explosion south of Baghdad, the US military announced in a statement yesterday.

The attack occurred at 10:40 pm (1840 GMT) on Sunday, said the statement, which provided no further details.

Based on a Pentagon tally, 1,551 US military personnel have been killed in Iraq since the US-led invasion two years ago.

## Girls 'missing out on schooling'

BBC ONLINE, Geneva

The United Nations children's organisation says 115 million children worldwide are missing out on an education - and most of them are girls.

The UN wants to achieve gender equality in primary education in 2005, as part of the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015.

There is evidence that more children are now going to school, Unicef says.

However, it adds that many countries in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East cannot meet the target this year.

Unicef is especially concerned about the situation in west and central Africa.

It says emergency measures are now needed to promote primary education.

Only five countries out of 24 are set to achieve gender equality there.

Conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of

Congo have done incalculable damage to children's education.

In South Asia, Unicef says, progress has been made, but not enough.

Across the region, 42 million children do not go to school. Afghanistan and Pakistan have the widest gender gaps.

For Pakistan to have the same number of girls as boys in school by 2015, it would have to increase girls' school attendance by more than 3 percent each year.