

Bush moves to lift nuke ban on India

Washington, Delhi agree on new global partnership

AFP, Washington

President George W. Bush said Monday he would ask Congress and allied nations to lift sanctions preventing Indian access to civil nuclear technology as part of a new bilateral partnership forged with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Bush said in a joint statement with the visiting Singh after talks here that he would "work to achieve full civil nuclear energy cooperation with India as it realises its goals of promoting nuclear power and achieving energy security."

The US leader said he would "seek agreement from Congress to adjust US laws and policies" and

work with "friends and allies to adjust international regimes" for such cooperation and trade with India.

The United States had placed sanctions on India after its second round of nuclear tests in May 1998, but agreed after the September 11, 2001 attacks to waive those and other sanctions in return for support in the war on terrorism.

India is not a party to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). US law bars export of technology that could aid a nuclear program of any country that has not signed the treaty.

Bush said nuclear cooperation could include "expeditious consider-

ation of fuel supplies" to the US-built Tarapur nuclear power plant near India's commercial hub of Mumbai.

The Tarapur reactor is reportedly down to its last stock of fuel from Russia, which has expressed its inability to continue the supply because of US restrictions on India.

President Bush, according to the statement, "conveyed his appreciation" to Singh over India's strong commitment to preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and said that "as a responsible state with advanced nuclear technology, India should acquire the same benefits and advantages as other such states."

Singh, who arrived in Washin-

gton Sunday on a four-day trip with all the trappings of a state visit, said his country would agree to "assume the same responsibilities and practices" as other leading nations with advanced nuclear technology.

They included separating civilian and military nuclear facilities and programs in a phased manner and placing its civilian facilities under safeguards imposed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the global nuclear watchdog.

Singh also pledged to maintain India's moratorium on nuclear testing.



PHOTO: AFP

US President George W. Bush (L) and First Lady Laura Bush (2nd L) look on as Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (R) and his wife Gursharan Kaur wave Monday upon arrival at the White House in Washington for a state dinner. This is the first state visit by an Indian prime minister to Washington in five years.

'June report led UK to lower terror alert'

REUTERS, New York

Britain's top intelligence and law enforcement officials concluded less than a month before the London bombings that there was no group with current intent and the capability to attack the UK, the New York Times reported yesterday, citing a confidential intelligence report.

The Times said authorities made their conclusion in the wake of a terror threat assessment by the Joint Terrorist Analysis Centre, which includes officials from Britain's top intelligence agencies, as well as Customs and the Metropolitan Police.

The assessment, according to the newspaper, prompted the British government to lower its formal threat assessment one level, from "severe defined" to "substantial."

Asked to comment on the document, a senior British official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said according to the newspaper, "We do not discuss intelligence assessments."



PHOTO: AFP

Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair (C) sits alongside the leader of the Liberal Democrats Charles Kennedy (L) and leader of the Conservatives Michael Howard during a meeting in Downing Street with British Muslim leaders yesterday in London. Tony Blair held talks Tuesday with British Muslim leaders in an attempt to tackle what he has dubbed the "evil ideology" motivating the London suicide bombers and other Islamic extremists.

UK to introduce tough anti-terror laws by Dec

AFP, London

Britain's interior minister moved a step closer Monday to passing tough new anti-terrorism laws by December after he won "broad support" from the opposition parties in the wake of the London bombings.

The news came as the death toll from the country's worst terror attack rose by one to 56, and as a report linked Britain's support of the Iraq war to the July 7 atrocity, turning up the heat on Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Home Secretary Charles Clarke said he and his counterparts in the main opposition Conservative and smaller Liberal Democrat parties agreed in principle to co-operate on the draft legislation following hour-

long talks.

"We believe that is the right way to go and we believe that it will enable us to address the threat we face with a unity and determination which is critical," Clarke, flanked by David Davis of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats' Mark Oaten, told reporters.

The bill is expected to be put before lawmakers in October when parliament reopens after its summer recess and become law by December.

The interior minister wrote to opposition parties Friday outlining plans for the bill that would outlaw the indirect incitement of terrorism, for example preachers who praise suicide bombers or describe them as martyrs.

STUDY SAYS 25,000 civilians killed in Iraq in two years

AFP, London

Almost 25,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed since US and British troops invaded the country two years ago, an average of 34 every single day, a British study said yesterday.

More of the deaths overall have been caused by the actions of foreign troops than insurgents within the country, the study by Iraq Body Count and the Oxford Research Group said.

However, the report stresses that the vast majority of civilian deaths

caused by US and British troops took place in the weeks following the start of war in March 2003, while currently far more deaths occur due to insurgency.

The estimate of 24,865 deaths over the two-year period to March this year is considerably lower than a number of 98,000 suggested in a study published last October by British-based medical journal The Lancet.

Nonetheless, the new report focuses attention on the suffering of Iraq's civilians, following a recent spate of suicide bombings, which have killed more than 100 people in

the past few days.

The report, "A Dossier on Civilian Casualties in Iraq 2003-2005", by a team led by John Sloboda from Britain's Keele University, analysed more than 10,000 media reports, many from Iraqi journalists and sourced from mortuary officials and medical staff.

In contrast, the study by The Lancet was based on a sample of 988 households in 33 randomly-selected neighbourhoods in Iraq, with the figures extrapolated for the whole country.

Kashmir incursions won't derail peace move: Delhi

REUTERS, Srinagar

A 20-month-old peace process between India and Pakistan is not at risk from a sudden spurt of incursions by Muslim militants into Indian Kashmir from Pakistan, an Indian army general said yesterday.

Lieutenant General S.S. Dhillon said the incursions and guerrilla violence would have to be on a much bigger level to derail the peace process that has led to better transport, sporting and commercial links between the nuclear rivals.

"This infiltration, I think is something which will not impact the peace process," Dhillon, head of the 15 corps guarding the ceasefire line in

Kashmir, told a news conference.

"It will have to be something far more violent or sensational than this routine infiltration. I think it will continue for some time and it should not affect the peace process."

Nearly three dozen militants trying to sneak into Indian Kashmir have been killed on the military Line of Control, which divides the Himalayan region between India and Pakistan, in a series of clashes with the army over the past 10 days.

The Indian government has consistently said Pakistan has to live up to its promise to stop the flow of Muslim militants into its part of Kashmir to join the nearly 16-year revolt there.

Musharraf calls for war against extremism

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, whose country is back in the spotlight since the London bombings, has urged a "jihad" against extremism and called on Pakistanis to reject terror.

As new closed-circuit videotape showed three of the four suspected attackers had been in Pakistan, Musharraf moved to shift some of the focus away from his country by reiterating his condemnation of all forms of terrorism.

"Terrorism in the name of Islam -- launching bomb attacks in London in the name of Islam -- is not Islam," said Musharraf.

Donors ask Lanka to honour truce

AFP, Colombo

The key foreign backers of Sri Lanka's peace process yesterday expressed concern over escalating violence on the island and asked both the Colombo government and Tamil rebels to stop the bloodshed.

The United States, Japan, the European Union and Norway, heading efforts to drum up international support for the peace process, said in a joint statement they were alarmed by the deteriorating situation and the 2002 truce.

"Unless security is guaranteed, a central pillar of the ceasefire agreement will be undermined," the statement said.

"If the ceasefire agreement

ceases to function, the wider peace process would be gravely jeopardised and international support for that process would be deeply eroded."

The warning from the peace effort's co-chairs came as Sri Lanka, trying to ease tension in the volatile northeast coastal region, stepped up a probe into charges that security forces were involved in the killing of four Tamil rebels earlier this month.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga's spokesman said she had ordered a broad investigation to identify those responsible for the deaths of the unarmed rebels, which sparked a wave of bombings in the region.

Typhoon Haitang tears through Taiwan

AFP, Taipei

Nearly one million people were evacuated as Typhoon Haitang raced towards mainland China yesterday after tearing through Taiwan, where two people were killed and two feared dead from the storm.

Haitang slowed after ploughing into Taiwan, causing millions of dollars of damage that brought the island to a virtual standstill on Monday, but is still expected to lash east and southeast China with ferocity.

The first storm of the season is approaching the mainland, packing winds of up to 119 kilometres per hour (74 miles per hour) and gusts of 160 kilometres per hour.

At 3:15 pm (0715 GMT) it had yet to make landfall, but officials at the Fujian flood control and drought relief office said the eye of the

typhoon would likely hit the city of Quanzhou soon.

"Typhoon Haitan is still several kilometres offshore, it will probably land by late afternoon," said one official who refused to be named.

Chinese authorities have been on high alert after learning lessons last year when Typhoon Rananim devastated the area, causing massive destruction and killing at least 164 people.

Frantic round-the-clock preparations that began Monday have seen volunteers and 5,000 armed police mobilised to evacuate people to higher ground, reports said.

In Fujian 539,000 people, including more than 300,000 fishermen, had been moved to safety, while 25,000 ships had taken shelter in provincial harbours, the Fujian Flood Relief Office said on its website.



PHOTO: AFP

A house still under construction slides to the Taimali river, in Taitung, eastern Taiwan, during a heavy storm caused by Typhoon Haitang yesterday. Two people were killed and another two were feared dead after Typhoon Haitang pounded Taiwan with powerful winds and rains, causing millions of US dollars of losses to crops, rescue officials said.

6 male members of a family killed in Kashmir

AFP, Jammu

Suspected militants yesterday shot dead six male members of a Muslim family in southern Kashmir and four militants were killed in a gunbattle with troops in the north of the state, police said.

Police said the family members of village head Mohd Akhtar were in their makeshift home in the village of Mahore, 150km east of Jammu, when they were attacked.

Initial reports were that all the victims were male but their ages and other details were not immediately available.