



PHOTO: AFP  
Pakistan Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir (R) shakes hands with Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon prior to a meeting in New Delhi yesterday. With infiltration bids and terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir recording an increase lately, India pressed Pakistan to take concrete action to curb flow of terrorists from its soil during the Foreign Secretary-level talks.

## Peace move with Pakistan 'under stress', says India

AFP, New Delhi

India yesterday said its peace process with Pakistan was "under stress," repeating allegations that "elements" in Islamabad were behind this month's suicide attack against its Kabul embassy.

"The composite dialogue itself is under stress. The dialogue is happening at a difficult time in our relationship with Pakistan," Indian Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon told reporters in New Delhi.

"In the recent past, several events have vitiated the atmosphere," he said.

"Incidents on the Line of Control (in Kashmir), incitement of violence, some (Pakistani)

leaders reverting to the old polemics -- and this sequence of events culminated in the suicide attack on our embassy in Kabul," he said.

"All our information... points to elements in Pakistan being behind the blast," Menon said after talks with Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir as part of a peace process the two nuclear-armed rivals launched in 2004.

"The dialogue process is stressed, and it will certainly affect our relations with Pakistan," Menon said.

"We, India, expect our concerns to be addressed," the foreign secretary said but added:

"We consider it important that the dialogue process should

continue."

The July 7 attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul left dozens dead, including India's military attaché and a diplomat.

Pakistan has already rejected previous allegations from Indian and Afghan officials that it was somehow involved in the bombing.

New Delhi also accuses Islamabad of backing Islamic militants who are waging an insurgency in the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir, which has triggered two of their three wars since 1947, and of being behind attacks in other parts of the country.

Pakistan also strongly denies it arms or trains the militants.

Ties between the South Asian

rivals had improved since 2004 with increased political, tourist, sporting and cultural exchanges.

But the process has had its frequent ups and downs.

India stalled peace talks in 2006 in the aftermath of a series of bomb explosions on commuter trains in India's commercial capital Mumbai in which 186 people were killed -- an attack also blamed in Islamabad.

Leaders of the rival nations -- Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf -- later agreed to resume the process after constituting an anti-terror panel comprising foreign and interior ministry officials from both sides.

## Pak nuclear scientist allowed to travel

AP, Islamabad

Lawyers say a court has eased some restrictions on the disgraced architect of Pakistan's nuclear programme, allowing him travel inside the country to meet with relatives.

Government lawyer Ahmer Bilal Sufi said Islamabad High Court on Monday also ordered authorities to allow Abdul Qadeer Khan to get treatment from any doctor of his choice.

Khan has been largely restricted to his villa in the capital since 2004 when he confessed to leaking nuclear technology to Iran, North Korea and Libya.

President Pervez Musharraf, however, pardoned Khan because of his contribution in making Pakistan a nuclear-armed state.

Judge Sardar Mohammed Aslam ruled that Khan will not be allowed to speak with media about nuclear proliferation.

## Taliban capture a remote district

Coalition soldier, dozens of militants killed

AFP, AP, Kabul

An international soldier and nearly two-dozen insurgents were killed in new attacks in Afghanistan while Taliban militants captured a remote district, authorities said yesterday.

The soldier, who was with the US-led coalition helping Afghanistan to fight the insurgency, died Monday after being wounded in a bomb explosion in the southern province of Helmand at the weekend, the force said in a statement.

The death took to 138 the number of international soldiers killed in Afghanistan this year, mostly in hostile action. Nearly 220 foreign soldiers died in violence last year.

About 20 Taliban rebels were also killed overnight after international helicopters attacked them in the eastern province of Khost, local government spokesman Khaibar Pashtun told AFP.

The choppers were called in after the rebels ambushed a police convoy, killing a policeman, Pashtun said.

Elsewhere in Khost an Afghan

driver was killed after militants attacked a convoy supplying a foreign military base there, a police official said.

Meanwhile a provincial official says an insurgent attack on a fuel truck has killed six civilians in eastern Afghanistan.

The official, Abdul Wakil Atak, says the truck was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade fired by insurgents in Laghman province on Sunday. Atak is a spokesman for the provincial governor.

Atak said Monday that two people were killed inside the truck and that four others died in a minibus that was caught in the blast.

The Nato-led military force in Afghanistan announced late Sunday that one of its troops had been killed in the same province.

Dozens of Taliban militants meanwhile captured a remote district in central Ghazni province overnight, killing one policeman and injuring two others, a government spokesman said.

Local security forces had fled the centre of Ajristan district, about 200km southwest of Kabul, the interior ministry spokesman Zemaral Bashary said.

## Rebels killed in Kashmir after pilgrims targeted

AFP, Srinagar

Indian troops killed two Islamic militants in Kashmir after thwarting an attempt by rebels to attack a convoy of Hindu pilgrims visiting the state, police said Monday.

Police said three other militants were also shot dead in two separate gunbattles overnight in two northern districts bordering Pakistan-ruled Kashmir.

The attempted attack on the pilgrims happened Sunday evening when militants threw grenades at pilgrims returning to the region's summer capital, Srinagar, after visiting a popular Hindu shrine on the outskirts of the city.

"Militants lobbed hand grenades and opened fire towards a convoy of vehicles carrying Hindu pilgrims but alert troops reacted quickly and shot dead both the attackers," a police officer Abdul Razaq said.

He said no pilgrims were hurt in the attack. "We have further strengthened security for the pilgrims," Razaq said.

The route to the shrine, based at the foothills of the Himalayas and visited by 400,000 pilgrims last year, has long been targeted by militants. An attack last year killed a local shopkeeper and wounded dozens of mainly pilgrims.

## Govt will win trust vote Says confident Indian PM

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh predicted yesterday his government will survive a confidence vote triggered by a controversial nuclear deal with Washington.

"We will prove our majority on the floor of the House," Singh told reporters outside the Lok Sabha, or parliament, which will start debating the motion on Monday.

Analysts and observers say the outcome of the vote, expected Tuesday, is too close to call.

The Indian parliament opened a special session Monday to discuss the confidence motion.

A loss for the Congress party-led alliance would plunge the world's largest democracy into early elections, and doom a deal aimed at bringing energy-hungry India into the fold of global nuclear energy commerce.

If every member of the 543-seat Lok Sabha casts a ballot, the government will need 272 votes to stay in office. If not, polls will take place latest by January.

Singh's Congress party, which is headed by Italian-born widow Sonia Gandhi, maintains it has the support of 290 deputies and that it can see through its last year in office.

But opposition parties -- includ-

ing the left and the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) -- are equally confident they can force national elections.

Earlier the Indian government was scouring for support Monday, trying to shore up its position a day before a no-confidence vote in parliament triggered by a controversial nuclear deal with Washington.

The government will collapse and early elections will be called if the coalition of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh loses on Tuesday, and experts say the vote in the 543-seat parliament is too close to call.

Singh's allies and the opposition have been battling to woo even tiny parties with just a handful of votes, with the outcome likely to be determined by only the smallest of margins.

The race is so tight, and the stakes are so high, that the government is letting six MPs serving jail terms out to vote. Meanwhile the opposition is paying for charter flights to bring in ailing lawmakers.

"The vote will be a close thing, as the smaller parties who hold the key may not back the prime minister," said political analyst Mahesh Rangarajan. "One should not be surprised if the government falls by a few votes."

Singh stirred up popular anger

by signing a nuclear accord with the United States which his government insists is essential to meet the energy needs of India's fast-growing economy and its one billion people.

India, which tested nuclear weapons in 1974 and 1998 and refuses to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, is currently barred from buying nuclear technology and fuel.

The deal would allow such purchases but subject India's civilian nuclear sites under international controls -- which are aimed at ensuring that any purchases are not diverted for military uses.

But opponents say the deal would bring traditionally non-aligned India too close to the United States. If the government collapses, the nuclear accord would almost certainly be put on hold.

The deal was signed in 2005 but has not been ratified because of the uproar, and the opposition believes it can capitalise on that anger -- and frustration over the economy -- to win a general election.

If every member of parliament casts a ballot on Tuesday, the government will need 272 votes to survive. If it loses, polls will take place by January at the latest.

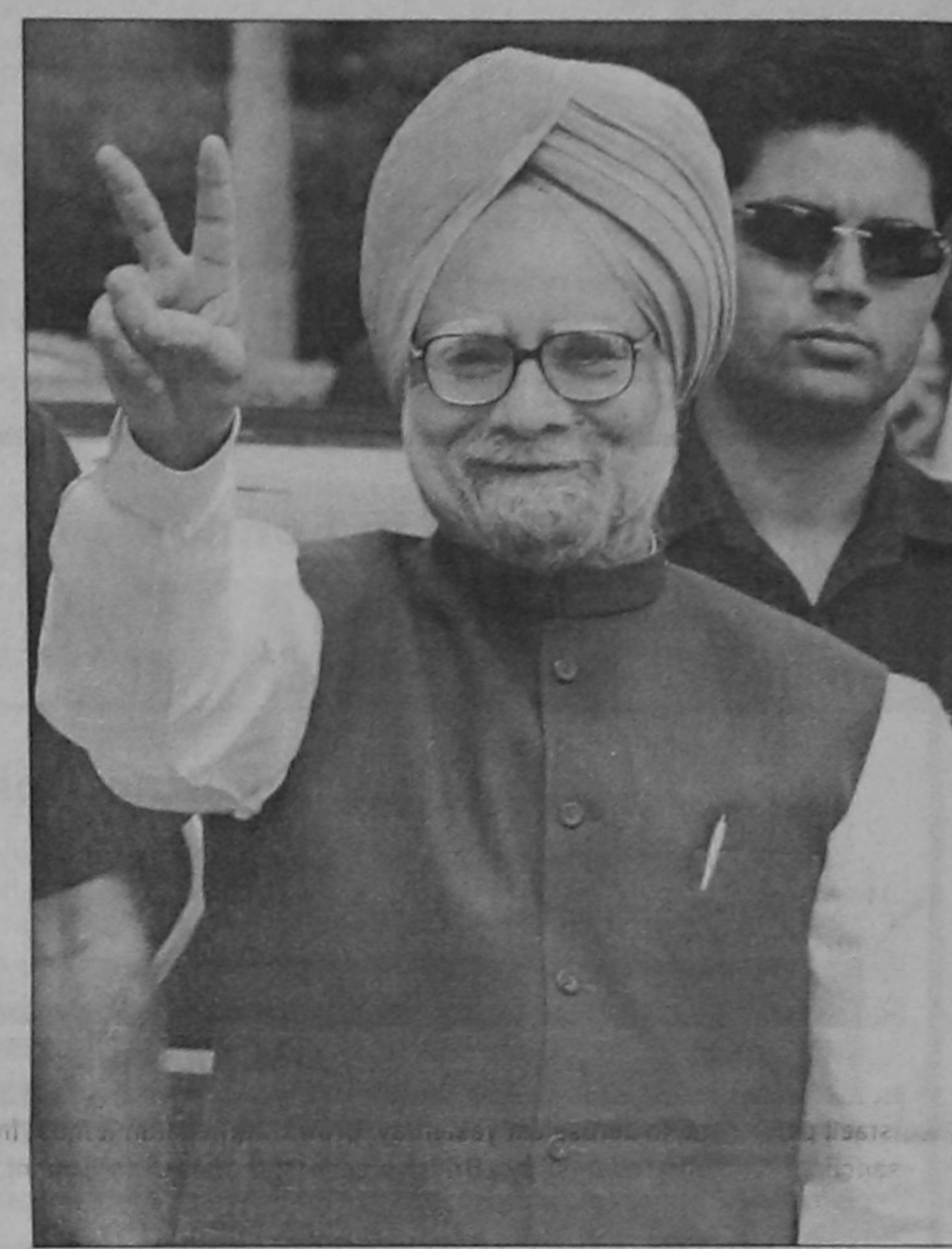


PHOTO: AFP  
Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh shows the victory sign on his arrival to attend the special session of Parliament in New Delhi yesterday. India's parliament opened a special session to debate a coalition government confidence motion triggered by a pullout of Left parties opposed to a nuclear deal with Washington.

## Pak provincial govt vows to keep up talks with militants

AFP, Peshawar

The government of North West Frontier Province on Monday vowed to continue a peace dialogue with militants but said it would keep the option of force as last resort, officials said.

Taliban warlord Baitullah Mehsud last week asked the provincial government to resign in five days or be ready for attacks, accusing it of failing to keep up promises made in peace agreements. But the government remained undeterred.

Mehsud, the chief of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, is accused by Islamabad of plotting the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto in December. He denies the accusation.

"We are not going to quit government under any circumstances

and with the will of Allah and the people's mandate, will complete the five-year term," North West Frontier Province information minister Mian Iftikhar Hussain told reporters after a cabinet meeting.

"No armed group can impose its will on the government. We will deal with this threat and face it sternly," Hussain said.

"Our first option is to resolve all disputes through negotiations and jirgas (tribal peace councils) and use force only as a last resort if the other side indulges in violence," he said.

"We are ready to take any threat head on and fight it, we will not be cowed down."

Hussain said the government was planning to launch peace awareness campaigns, set up district level peace committees and enlist volunteers to help promote the initiative.

Hussain admitted the security situation was not "ideal" but said the government's policy of negotiation was geared to ensure peace for the people of the restive province bordering Afghanistan.

He said the government was still abiding by the peace agreement in northwestern Swat valley and militants should remember that the deadlines set for meeting their demands had not yet passed.

He said under the agreement the government had released 19 militants from a list of 60 and others will be freed after legal formalities.

Hussain said the government had still two months left for the imposition of 1999 Sharia regulations under the Swat peace agreement and added the military would be withdrawn once the agreement is respected.

## More US troops needed for Afghanistan: Obama

AFP, Washington

Conditions in Afghanistan are "precarious and urgent," Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama warned in an interview aired Sunday as he renewed his call for an immediate increase in US troops there.

"The Afghan government needs to do more, but we have to understand that the situation is precarious and urgent here in Afghanistan," Obama told CBS news during his first trip to the country that is facing a resurgent Taliban insurgency.

Obama called for at least two more brigades to be sent to Afghanistan.

"Now is the time for us to do it. I think it's important for us to begin planning for those brigades now," he said.

"If we wait until the next admin-

istration, it could be a year before we get those additional troops on the ground here in Afghanistan. I think that would be a mistake."

Obama, who met in Kabul Sunday with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, said the United States had been "distracted" by the war in Iraq and should instead be focused on fighting al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

"And I believe this has to be our central focus, the central front on our battle against terrorism," he said.

"They have sanctuary here," Obama said of insurgents from al-Qaeda and the Taliban, adding that they have been "gathering huge amounts of money" as a consequence of the region's drug trade.

"I think one of the biggest mistakes we've made strategically after 9/11 was fail to finish the job here, focus our attention here," Obama said.



PHOTO: AFP  
Nepal's first post-royal president Ram Baran Yadav (L) is greeted by supporters after his election win in Kathmandu yesterday. Lawmakers in Nepal voted the country's first post-royal president rejecting a candidate backed by the Maoists.

## Lankan troops kill 42 more rebels

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan troops have killed dozens of Tamil Tiger rebels during ground battles across the war-torn island's northern district, the defence ministry said yesterday.

The military said 42 rebels died in fighting on Sunday, while 10 of

its soldiers were injured.

The ground battles raised to 5,102 the number of rebels the ministry has said it has killed since January, while listing 447 troop losses in the same period.

The military figures cannot be independently verified because the ministry prevents journalists from travelling to the frontlines.

The Tamil Tigers did not comment on the casualties, but said eight civilians were injured when the navy and air force shelled a coastal fishing community in the island's north on Sunday.

Army Chief Lieutenant General Sarath Fonseka Saturday said forces had wiped out two-thirds of the Tigers' military capability.

## বিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে- বিগত ১৯৯৬ সনে তৎকালীন গৃহসংস্থান অধিদপ্তর (বর্তমানে জাতীয় গৃহায়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ) কর্তৃক মোহাম্মদপুরস্থ "এফ" ব্লকের প্রটের জন্য দরখাস্ত আহবান করা হয়েছিল। অধিবেশন দখল এবং মামলার কারণে প্রট প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়ন করা সম্ভবপর হয়নি। বর্তমানে উক্ত স্থানে প্রট প্রকল্পের পরিবর্তে ফ্ল্যাট প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নের কাজ হাতে নেয়া হয়েছে। ফ্ল্যাটের আয়তন হবে- ১,০২০ বর্গফুট এবং ১,২৩০ (সিডি, লবি, লিফট সহ) বর্গফুট। ফ্ল্যাটের অনুমানিক মূল্য (কম/বেশী) যথাক্রমে ৩৫,০০,০০০/- এবং ৪০,০০,০০০/- টাকা। বিস্তারিত প্রসঙ্গে জানতে বর্ণনা করা হবে।

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সেগুনবাগিচা, ঢাকা

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