

Pak Army officers arrested for collaborating with terrorists, says Malik

ANI, Lahore

Pakistan's Interior Minister Rehman Malik has said that officers of the rank of Major, who wanted to target army generals and elements in the intelligence agencies sympathetic towards terrorists, have been arrested.

There have been some elements in the intelligence agencies who have had links with terrorists, including Baithullah Mehsud, Qari Ilyas and Qari Hussain and with banned organisations, Malik told a private TV channel on Monday.

Replies to a question, he said South Waziristan had become a hub of anti-state activities and terrorists from various areas, including Hangu, Bajaur and Mohmand

## Pakistanis in Swat fear Taliban come back

AFP, Mingora

Frightened civilians fear the Taliban will pounce again on Pakistan's Swat as residents try to rebuild shattered lives and shot nerves in the mountain valley once likened to Switzerland.

Pakistan claims the military has "eliminated" the extremists, two years after they rose up under an militant cleric to enforce repressive Islamic laws and more than two months after launching a new offensive under US pressure.

But stringent security checks, unexploded ordnance and ruined homes lie in wait for some of Pakistan's nearly two million people displaced by fighting between government forces and Taliban militants across the northwest.

"I can smell them. I'm still afraid of them," said Badar Gul on the outskirts of Mingora, where his bus stalled in a snarl of vehicles carrying home people encouraged by the government to think the worst is over.

The 65-year-old Gul was headed with his five-member family to the northern town of Charbagh, desperate to leave his refugee camp

but uncertain about the future in Swat, whose rich tourist industry was decimated by the Taliban.

"The Taliban may come back and the Taliban still have hideouts in the hilly areas," said Gul, whose bus was laid on by the government to repatriate families from Jalozai camp on the sweltering lowland plains.

Voluntary returns have been going on for weeks. An army spokesman claimed Tuesday that nearly 100,000 families have returned to Swat.

Pakistan launched its latest offensive to dislodge Taliban guerrillas from districts in and around the valley last April after rebels flouted a peace deal and advanced into new territory further south towards Islamabad.

Commanders say more than 1,800 militants and 166 security personnel have died but none of the most-wanted Taliban leadership in Swat have been killed or captured. Neither is there any independent confirmation of the death tolls.

"A year ago the government promised us that Swat was clear but Taliban rule returned. Now the government announced the same thing again. It's a total drama," said Gul.



PHOTO: AFP

This picture taken on July 31 shows a Pakistani soldier standing alert on a street in Mingora, the capital of troubled Swat valley. Frightened civilians fear that Taliban will pounce again on Pakistan's Swat as nervous residents try to rebuild shattered lives in the mountain valley once likened to Switzerland.



## Nepali Maoists step up pressure on govt

PTI, Kathmandu

A day after issuing a three-day "ultimatum" to the government to restore "civilian supremacy" in Nepal, the Maoists yesterday announced their months-long agitation plan that will start with a blockade of parliament on August 7.

The former rebels, who are demanding the dissolution of the Madhav Kumar Nepal government, yesterday threatened to launch a protest movement "from the streets and parliament" if their demands were not met by August 6.

The Maoists said they would start the blockade of Parliament from August 7 and stage protests in all district headquarters beginning August 9. Top Maoist leader C P Gajurel said the party would boycott all public functions attended by President Ram Baran Yadav from August 27 and from August 31 onward they would boycott the Prime Minister's public programmes.

From September 5 to 15 the Maoists will boycott all programmes attended by the ministers and also hold public meetings in different parts of the country as part of their agitation programme. The Maoists have been raising the demand for upholding "civilian supremacy" since its chief Prachanda had to quit as Prime Minister in May after the President shot down his move to sack Army Chief General Rukmangad Katwala.

## No doubt on Manmohan's sincerity: Pak PM

ANI, Islamabad

Pakistan's Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani has showered praise on his Indian counterpart Dr. Manmohan Singh, saying that he had no doubt about his sincerity towards the peace process.

Speaking in the National Assembly, Gilani said, "We, in Pakistan, have no doubt about Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's sincerity in working to improve Pakistan-India relations by addressing the issues that have divided us or bedevilled our relations for decades."

He said on Monday that the joint statement issued after a meeting with Dr Singh in Sharm el-Sheikh was a victory for both Pakistan and India.

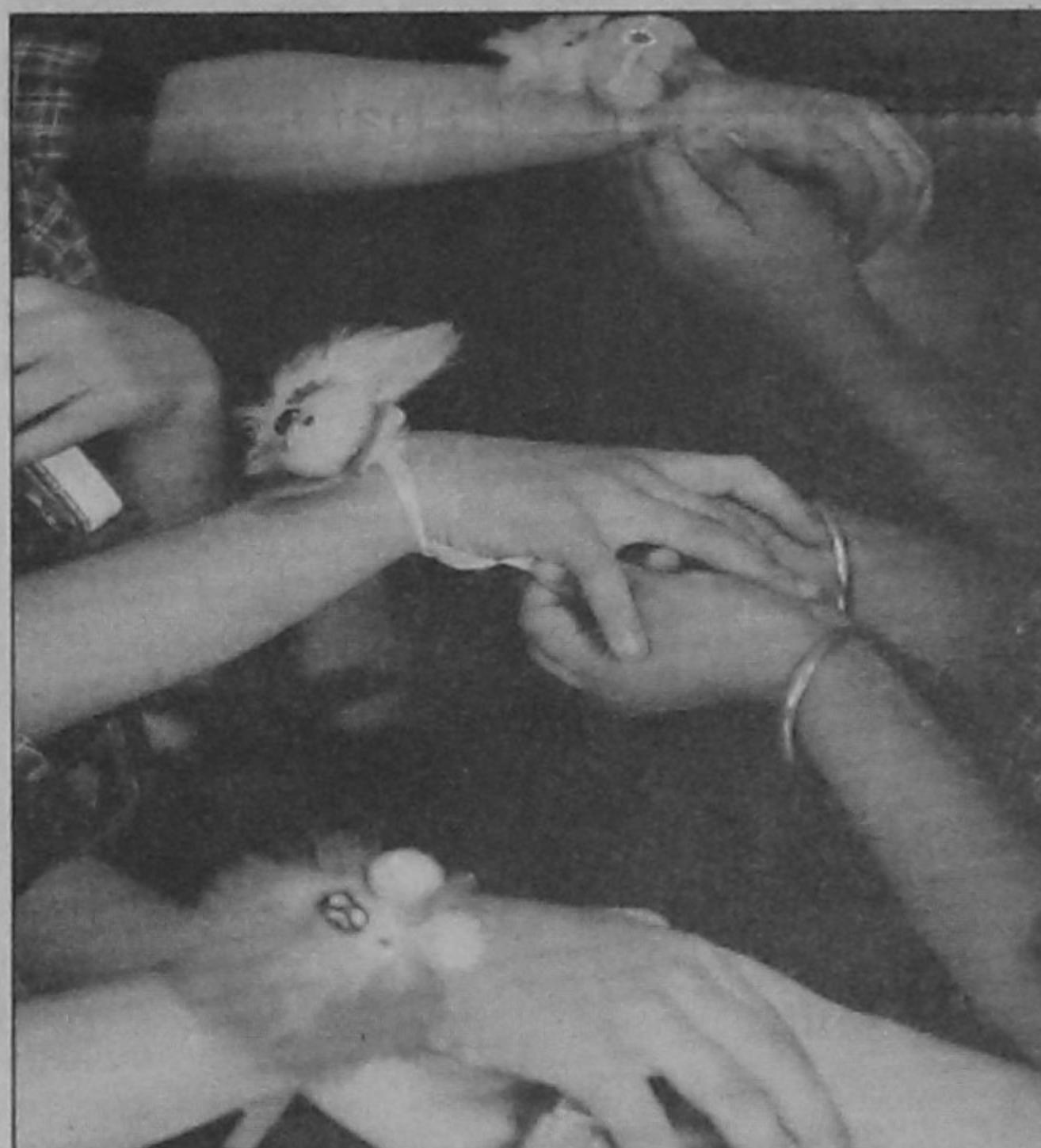
Gilani said that a sustained dialogue and engagement with India were the real way forward and it was important to resume the composite dialogue as it offered a mechanism to thrash out differences over disputes like Kashmir and water.

"It is our conviction that a durable peace and stability in South Asia can only be established by making meaningful progress toward resolving outstanding issues," he added.

Commenting on a perception in India that the Sharm el-Sheikh declaration was a victory for Pakistan, Gilani said: "We have seen some disquiet, being expressed in India by certain circles, on the outcome of the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, but we believe that at this historic juncture it is imperative not to be swayed by partisan considerations."

"It is essential to keep our sights on the long-term vision and the summit outcome must not be viewed in a zero-sum perspective, for, this is a win-win for both sides as the cause of peace in South Asia has been advanced," Gilani said.

Emphasising Pakistan's "victory" over India at Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt, Gilani told members of the National Assembly here on Monday that he had managed to uphold Islamabad's interests and claimed the upper hand in talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.



## New Nato chief chairs 1st meet on Afghanistan

AP, Brussels

Nato's new civilian and military leaders briefed top members yesterday on command changes in Afghanistan and other matters affecting the escalating war, a spokesman said.

Both Nato Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and supreme allied commander US Adm James Stavridis are new to their posts, part of a new team who will direct the conflict in Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan.

Traditionally, an American officer commands the alliance's military forces from Nato headquarters in Mons, Belgium, while a European civilian heads its political office in Brussels.

## Walkout in Lok Sabha on Saeed's release

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

Opposition parties walked out of the Lok Sabha yesterday on the issue of the Pakistani Supreme Court indefinitely adjourning the case against the release from house arrest of Jamaat-ud-Daawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed, who India says masterminded the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

As the house assembled at 1 p.m. after a 45-minute adjournment caused by the same issue, Leader of Opposition L.K. Advani of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) demanded a clarification from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh or External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna on what he termed their contradictory statements on Pakistan.

Advani cited Krishna's interview in a leading newspaper in which he said "all talks between the foreign secretaries of the two countries are futile" till Pakistan takes credible action against the perpetrators of the Mumbai terror attacks.

"The prime minister had earlier stated that foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan would meet any number of times till it is necessary," Advani then pointed out.

Demanding an explanation on the statements, Advani said, "Either the prime minister

or the foreign minister should explain this contradiction."

After Advani, Congress MP from Maharashtra Sanjay Nirupam spoke on the issue, demanding that Saeed must be brought to book and punished. He must be arrested again."

On Monday, Pakistan's Supreme Court indefinitely adjourned the hearing of petitions challenging Saeed's release from house arrest in June, effectively setting him free.

Janata Dal-United (JD-U) leader Sharad Yadav said: "Terrorism and dialogue can not go together. Talks are meaningless if Saeed is not brought to book".

According to former railways minister and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad, everyone in the country knows that he is the mastermind. Pakistan had also admitted this, but it seems that the (Indian) government is getting trapped in the mess of the (Sharm el-Sheikh) joint statement.

"We have been beaten diplomatically. Unless action is taken against Saeed, people will not be satisfied," Lalu Prasad maintained.

Thereafter, MPs of the Samajwadi Party and RJD walked out, prompting Advani to lead the National Democratic Alliance members out.

## British lawmakers call for inquiry into torture allegations

AFP, London

The British government was hiding behind a "wall of secrecy" over allegations security agents colluded in the torture of terrorism suspects, an influential committee of lawmakers said yesterday.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights urged an independent inquiry into claims of British knowledge of use of torture on suspects held overseas, branding government accountability of the issues "woefully deficient."

In report, the committee said such an inquiry was the only way of restoring public confidence in intelligence and security agencies MI5 and MI6 in the wake of the "extremely serious" allegations in the "war on terror".

"An independent inquiry is the only way to get to the bottom of these stories, clear the air and make recommendations for the future conduct and management of the security services," the report said.

"The recent allegations should be a wake-up call to ministers that the current arrangements are not satisfactory."

"We look to the government to respond positively to our recommendations and not to continue to hide behind their wall of secrecy."

Lawmakers also urged the government to follow the US, by releasing any instructions given to agents on questioning and detention of suspects overseas and legal advice about the issues.

## HR Watch slams Lanka over aid workers' death

AFP, Colombo

The New York-based group Human Rights Watch yesterday pressed for an international probe into the killings in Sri Lanka of 17 local employees of a French charity three years ago.

HRW marked the anniversary of the execution-style murders of the Action Against Hunger (ACF) workers in Sri Lanka's northeastern town of Muttur with a scathing attack on the country's leaders.

"Since the ACF massacre, the (President Mahinda) Rajapakse government has

put on an elaborate song and dance to bedazzle the international community into believing justice is being done," said HRW director James Ross.

"It's time the UN and concerned governments say 'the show is over' and put into place a serious international inquiry."

ACF itself has demanded an international investigation after a government probe failed to identify any suspects.

The call came last month after a Sri Lankan investigation cleared the military of killing the 17 employees of the charity, but ordered more compensation for the families of the victims.

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## News In Brief

### Vietnam War-era bomb kills 4

AFP, Hanoi

Four people including a couple and their eight-year-old daughter were killed in a blast in Vietnam while they were trying to remove explosive material from a war-era bomb, police said yesterday.

The Monday explosion also killed a neighbour of the couple and injured their three-year-old son, who is in a serious condition, said Xo Minh Hai, a police official of Son Hoa district in central Phu Yen province.

### Venezuela mulls media 'muzzle'

AFP, Caracas

A media committee in Venezuela's parliament is set to begin Tuesday studying a draft law that, if approved, could jail anyone publishing comments that authorities consider a threat to national interests.

The controversial text will be weighed just days after President Hugo Chavez's government revoked the licenses of 32 radio stations and two local television stations "to democratise the radio-electric spectrum."



Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama (R) looks on as visiting Foreign Minister U Nyan Win (L) of Myanmar addresses media in Colombo yesterday. Sri Lanka and Myanmar celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations this year.

Authorities killed rats and fleas yesterday as they disinfected a town sealed off after three people died of pneumonic plague in a remote farming town in northwestern China, according to the provincial health department.

Police set up checkpoints around Ziketan in Qinghai province after the outbreak was first detected last Thursday. The lung infection is highly contagious and can kill a person in as few as 24 hours if left untreated.

Medical staff are disinfecting the area and killing rodents and insects that can be carriers for the bacteria, a notice on the provincial health department Web site said. Authorities are keeping close track of

people who came into contact with those infected.

Authorities urged anyone who had visited the town more than 480km west of Beijing since mid-July and has developed a cough or fever to seek hospital treatment. Pneumonic plague is passed through the air and can be passed from person to person through coughing.

The latest victim was a 64-year-old man named Danzhi, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

He was a neighbour of a 32-year-old herdsman in Ziketan and a 37-year-old man who died earlier. A further nine people mainly relatives of the herdsman are infected and in a hospital, according to the local health bureau.