

# ...Musharraf:

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hopes it's a breakthrough." Asked when formal consultations would be held, Gen Musharraf said: "No dates have been fixed, but there is an urgency for a formal dialogue and I hope it will occur in the near future..."

Despite Pakistan attaching great symbolic value to the meeting, India said the meeting did not indicate any change in stand on Pakistan. The country would not resume talks with Pakistan until it took firm steps against terrorist groups operating from its territory.

Later, upon arriving at New Delhi airport, Mr Vajpayee underplayed the interaction and the handshake between them at the close of the summit. "Bataane layak kya hai? Dua salaami hui thi. Haal chaal pucha gaya. Baat khatam ho gayi (What's there to say? We exchanged pleasantries. We inquired about each other. The conversation was over)."

Asked if he would attend the next Saarc summit in Islamabad, Mr Vajpayee said: "Sthithi saamanya rahi to zaroor jaoonga."

The Indian leadership's dogged public posture is being widely seen as unyielding, compared with Gen Musharraf's reasonableness; once again suggesting that the Pakistani President has been more media savvy.

The Kathmandu Declaration adopted by Saarc noted that terrorism posed "one of the most serious threats to international peace."

Among other things, the leaders committed themselves to dismantling trade barriers by concluding a framework South Asian Free Trade Area treaty this year. The Saarc nations also pledged to suppress financial sources of militant groups.

They plan to attain the goal by criminalising the collection of funds for extremism and refrain from organising, instigating, assisting or allowing the use of their territories for such acts and redoubling efforts to tackle poverty and other ills afflicting the region on a war-footing.

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