

# Blair endorses India's stand on cross-border terrorism: Sinha

By Amit Baruah. #10-1

LONDON, OCT. 12. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, expressed concern at the success of fundamentalist parties in the just-concluded elections in Pakistan during a meeting with his British counterpart, Tony Blair, this afternoon.

Briefing presspersons after the talks at Mr. Blair's country residence, the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, said the British leader had "endorsed" India's position that no dialogue was possible without an end to cross-border terrorism.

In what amounted to direct comments on the internal affairs of Pakistan, Mr. Sinha stated that India was clearly of the view that democracy had not returned to Pakistan after the elections. It appeared that the Vajpayee Government was returning the compliment to the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, for his comments on the Gujarat killings.

Mr. Sinha maintained that Mr. Blair had congratulated Mr. Vajpayee on the successful conduct of elections to the Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly. He quoted the Mr. Blair as saying that the polls were free and fair, but were not free of violence.

In response to questions, Mr. Sinha said that India had seen the comments made by the European Union observer team in Pakistan about the elections there. "I would certainly say



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, with his British counterpart, Tony Blair, at the latter's country residence in Chequers, 65 km from London, on Saturday. — Reuters

that the results of the Pakistani elections were pre-determined...," Mr. Sinha said, endorsing the opinion expressed by the EU observers.

He accused the Musharraf re-

gime of backing the fundamentalist parties that had done well in the polls. He said the Prime Minister had spoken of the emergence of the fundamentalist parties in the context of the

developing situation in Afghanistan and the regrouping of fundamentalist forces. Both countries, it was agreed, needed to keep a close watch on the situation.

On South Asia, Mr. Sinha quoted Mr. Blair as saying that dialogue and terrorism could not go on side by side. There was need to end cross-border terrorism in order to facilitate a dialogue.

The situation in Iraq also came up for discussion. Asked if there were any differences of approach between New Delhi and London on Iraq, he said: "It did not come out that way."

Mr. Blair gave his assessment of the prevailing situation in Iraq. For his part, Mr. Vajpayee said India favoured a "multilateral approach" and all actions taken under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Indo-British bilateral relationship came up during the talks, which lasted some 80-85 minutes. Mr. Blair expressed satisfaction at the progress in all spheres.

Mr. Vajpayee told Mr. Blair that there was a need to push ahead with cooperation in the fields of trade and commerce. Also, British Ministers should visit India more often.

The Prime Minister suggested that the two countries cooperate in the ongoing reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. There was scope for Indian and British cooperation in joint projects in third countries.

# India and Britain

By K. K. Katyal

*Mr. Vajpayee's coming meeting with Mr. Blair is to be seen as part of an intense interaction that characterises the bilateral relationship now, though it may be dominated by the India-Pakistan problem and Kashmir.*

THE PORTION of the British Foreign Office in London housing the departments dealing with India and other countries of South Asia used to be the Colonial Office before Independence. The official responsible for conducting mediapersons points to a room that used to be occupied by Winston Churchill as the Colonial Secretary. It suddenly brings to mind his oft-quoted remark as Prime Minister: "I have not become the last Prime Minister of His Majesty's Government to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire." The Prince of Wales in the old days used to have a room for functions connected with the colonies and Indian princes often visited the Colonial Office for courtesy calls. There is a long concrete slab, serving as a bench, on the outer rim of the corridor. "They used to sit there while waiting to be summoned." In another corner, a conference room has chairs and tables of the East India Company days.

To say that Britain's relationship with India has undergone a mighty transformation is to stress the obvious. Even in the last two decades or so there have been small but significant transformations. Contrast the days when Margaret Thatcher used to cite her country's laws in support of her inability to proceed against shady organisations using British territory as a springboard for violent activities in India with the present-day all-out campaign against terrorist organisations. One cannot imagine now dialling a local number and hearing a taped voice (of Jagjit Singh Chauhan): "This is president of the Khalistan Government-in-exile. Please leave your number. I will call back soon." The anti-terrorist law has been tightened to counter all manner of terrorist threats — through detentions, targeting of funds, freezing of assets, preventing abuses of immigration. Most of these measures were taken after 9/11, but in some ways London had moved away from the Thatcher line even earlier.

Recall the days when top leaders of the Labour Party (when in the Opposition) took an out-and-out pro-Pakistan position, with the Shadow

Ministers calling for a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir to resolve the "dispute", and now look at the stance of the Labour Government on, say, the terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir (the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw's references to Pakistan's involvement).

The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's one-day working visit to London after the India-E.U. summit in Copenhagen later this week is to be seen in the broad context of the evolving relationship in general and intensive political-level interaction on specific issues in particular. This will be the fourth meeting between Mr. Vajpayee and his British counterpart, Tony Blair, in a year. (Mr. Blair has been to India twice and Mr. Vajpayee will be going to London for the second time). Mr. Straw has been to India thrice and to Pakistan four times, while the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, visited the two countries on two occasions. This was part of the "continuous dialogue with the Governments of India and Pakistan, seeking to avert a major conflict," to quote a British official document.

During the January visit to India of Mr. Blair, the "New Delhi Declaration" committed the two sides to firm measures to counter terrorism. Its four principles bear repetition. One, terrorism cannot be justified on any ground and must be condemned unambiguously and eradicated wherever it exists. Two, all those who support terrorism, directly or indirectly, must be condemned, including those individuals and groups that finance, train or provide support to terrorists. Three, both countries support the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1373 which makes a comprehensive case for rooting out terrorism globally. Four, both sides agree to collaborate in the counter-terrorism exercise by including joint training

under the framework of the U.K.-India Working Group on Terrorism.

The two Prime Ministers designated special envoys — the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary, Brajesh Mishra, and the Chief Foreign Policy Adviser (of Mr. Blair), David Manning — to conduct a strategic dialogue of the type that had been on between India and France, with useful results.

This week's talks will be informal as against the structured meetings of the past. The venue, Chequers, the countryside residence of Mr. Blair, will ensure conformity with this format. There are two ways of looking at the coming talks — one, given the immediate context, the stalemate in India-Pakistan relations and the Kashmir problem, the focus will be on "what next" after the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly poll and the parliamentary elections in Pakistan on the one hand, and, the Iraq crisis and American moves, fully backed by the U.K., for ouster of the Saddam Hussein regime, on the other. Two, the larger backdrop of the bilateral relationship, which will involve exchange of views on economic ties, science and technology and issues such as the E.U.

On India-Pakistan relations, British officials, while reiterating their denunciation of terrorist violence, set great store by the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's assurances to the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, to put an end to infiltration of militants permanently and his anti-terrorist package of January 12. They are impressed by the results — "dramatic" drop in infiltration till the end of May, slight rise by the end of June, increase since then but at a "significantly low" level (all this before the pre-poll spurt in violence). "Gen. Musharraf has stopped infiltration to the extent the administration was involved. We believe he has taken

firm steps." This was an endorsement of the Pakistani ruler's public position that infiltration now was confined to the members of divided families and rogue elements. The break-up of the infiltration is given thus: 40 per cent of them are Kashmiris who had gone from the Indian side for training, 60 per cent are from Pakistan. Pressure on Pakistan is to be kept up, they say. As for the situation on the Indian side, attention is drawn to the poor quality of governance in Jammu and Kashmir (construction of a golf course near the Inter-Continental Hotel, Srinagar, is cited as a case of distorted priorities), the human rights record and the need to address the autonomy issue.

The idea of resuming dialogue is repeatedly stressed — as part of a sequence of which the rejection of terrorism is to be the first step. A case is made out for engagement with the "democratic" Government in Pakistan after the elections there. However, my point, that even in the post-election dispensation, real power would continue to reside in Gen. Musharraf, who will remain the Chief of the Army Staff, is well taken. Would India's talks with the "democratically elected" Prime Minister, Mohammed Junejo, in the 1980s have produced any result when Zia-ul-Haq continued to be the effective ruler? The question receives attention but is left at that.

As for the Kashmir poll, they "want successful outcome in terms of participation". The view, formed after the completion of the poll may not be negative. Violence and killings, clearly related to the electoral process, could not go unnoticed but how they are assessed and evaluated in political terms will have to be seen.

As regards Iraq, there is no ambiguity about the British stand. New Delhi's view is completely different — though it is stated in a low key. It will be a case of divergence, not of clash. Mr. Vajpayee's coming meeting with Mr. Blair is to be seen as part of an intense interaction that characterises the bilateral relationship now, though it may be dominated by the India-Pakistan problem and Kashmir.

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HINDU

# Straw visit futile

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, July 22. — The British foreign secretary, Mr Jack Straw, left for his country on Saturday after what is being seen as a futile visit to the subcontinent.

"We (New Delhi) clearly told the British government during Mr Straw's visit that further de-escalation would only take place after General Pervez Musharraf honours his commitment to end cross-border terrorism," the foreign ministry spokesperson, Mrs Nirupama Rao, said.

During the dinner hosted in Mr Straw's honour after his return from Islamabad, Mr Yashwant Sinha, too, told him that while infiltration from across the LoC was down, it was "far from over". The foreign minister said

Pakistan's "flip-flop" in policy" was evident from Gen Musharraf's interviews to *Newsweek* and *Time*.

"Each of these were followed by enhanced level of infiltration and terrorist attacks. Therefore, it is India's view that Pakistan must take further steps to end infiltration and deal with the infrastructure that supports terrorism," Mrs Rao said.

## Afghans spotted

Security forces have intensified vigil along the border after some Afghan infiltrators were spotted in Kashmir. There was, however, "no clinching evidence" to show that

these people belonged to the Al Qaida, the BSF said, adds SNS from New Delhi. The BSF's new director-general, Mr Ajai Raj Sharma, said the Afghans may have infiltrated into the Valley in groups and not in ones or twos.

## Srinagar blast

SRINAGAR, July 22. — Hizbul Mujahideen militants today triggered an IED planted under a car inside a CRPF camp here, injuring a jawan.

Claiming responsibility for the blast that took place at 11.55 a.m. at Regal Chowk, a Hizbul spokesman said its activists had planned a suicide attack after the blast, but called it off for it would have killed civilians. — PTI

# Pak. needs to take more steps: Straw

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, JULY 19. The British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, will be shuttling between New Delhi and Islamabad for "separate discussions" with the two Governments on finding ways to further reduce tensions between the two countries.

Mr. Straw, who will take a special flight to Islamabad tomorrow for talks with the Pakistani leadership, held discussions on the South Asian scenario and other bilateral issues with the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, and the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Brajesh Mishra, today.

Mr. Straw, who said his travel plans had dictated his return to New Delhi tomorrow evening, said he would be meeting Mr. Sinha again before leaving for London. Repeatedly urging a permanent end to infiltration from the Pakistani side of the Line of Control, Mr. Straw said the international community was not about to walk away from the prevailing situation in South Asia.

To a question if the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, had done enough to curb cross-border terrorism, Mr. Straw said he was glad to note that progress had been made, but there were "further steps" that needed to be taken before "we can secure a situation where there can be an active dialogue".

## Centrality of Kashmir issue

While India should be happy about Mr. Straw's stress on Pakistan needing to take further steps on curbing terrorism, his formulation on the centrality of resolving the Kashmir issue may be less than pleasing to New Delhi. "We are always concerned about the situation here and we shall stay concerned — I am sure the international community as a whole will be — till there is a resolution of this long-standing conflict between India



The British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, with the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, in New Delhi on Friday. — Photo: V.V. Krishnan

and Pakistan about Kashmir... that's at the heart of it..." he said. In his opening statement, Mr. Straw said that after his last visit and that of the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, levels of infiltration from across the LoC had come down and India took a number of de-escalatory measures, both of which were welcomed. "Ob-

viously, we want to see a permanent end to infiltration across that Line of Control. Tension since Mr. Armitage and I were here last has been lowered although the situation across the LoC remains difficult," he said.

Mr. Straw said that he discussed the coming elections to the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly with his Indian interloc-

utors. "India has a commendable record overall in establishing legislative frameworks and human rights' machinery. We will continue to encourage India to improve the human rights situation in Jammu and Kashmir." On what Britain wanted from the elections in Jammu and Kashmir, he said London wanted the will of the people to be expressed and that the environment for the elections should be free and fair.

Referring to the pledge that Gen. Musharraf had given to curb terrorism, Mr. Straw said this was a matter of record that the Pakistani leader was "very committed" to end terrorism.

In a related development, the Foreign Office spokesperson said that India's concerns about continuing infiltration from across the LoC were conveyed to Mr. Straw. She repeated that until infiltration stopped and the infrastructure of terrorism dismantled, India was in no position to speed up any further de-escalatory steps. The British side, she added, expressed understanding of the Indian position.

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# Delhi cold to Straw mission

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 18

BRITISH FOREIGN Secretary Jack Straw, who arrived today on his second peace mission, may have to return empty-handed. New Delhi has already given hints that he cannot expect any more rollback of its sanctions against Pakistan.

The hosts will not give Straw the luxury of airing his views to the media. The Confederation of Indian Industry, which hosted a luncheon meeting for him, has been instructed by the Ministry of External Affairs to allow only a "photo-op".

There will be no joint Press conference with the new External Affairs Minister, like the one he had with Jaswant Singh in May on his first mission. The South Block ruled out the British request for one, leaving the High Commission no option but hire a banquet in a five-star hotel to organise a Press interaction for its boss.

What may shock Straw most is that his request for a call on Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and his Deputy L K Advani has not been confirmed. Late today, the official programme only mentioned meetings with External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha and National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra.

"We will make our position on our expectations from Pakistan clear. Unless there is evidence on the ground of clear ac-

## Terror camps still operating in PoK

INDIA ON Thursday said that 70 to 80 terrorist training camps are still operational in PoK and Pakistan.

According to Army estimates, 97 terrorists reared at these camps have infiltrated into J&K in June alone. Infiltration picked up in mid-June after a brief lull following international pressure on Pakistan to reign in terrorists operating from its soil and stop infiltration.

"The ISI continues to harbour, train and fund terrorist organisations operating in J&K," George Fernandes told the Parliament on Thursday.

HTC, New Delhi

tion, we will not roll back any more of the sanctions imposed after the attack on Parliament," a MEA spokesperson said.

New Delhi has obviously been stung by the non-stop snubbing resorted to in Washington to protect America's "friend" in Islamabad. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher has rejected India's demand for declaring Pakistan a terrorist state, saying the country has made a big contribution to anti-terrorism.

19 JUL 2002

# Waiting for Pak. action, India tells Britain

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JULY 4.** Emphasising the recent incidents of interdiction of terrorists across the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, India today told Britain that it was waiting for Pakistan to deliver on its promise of stopping all infrastructure support to militants.

That New Delhi would not compromise with its national security was conveyed to the visiting British Defence Secretary, Geoffrey Hoon, during his meetings with the National Security Adviser, Brajesh Mishra, and the Minister of External Affairs, Yashwant Sinha.

The chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee, Gen. S. Padmanabhan, also called on Mr. Hoon and acquainted him with the border situation — particularly the four instances of attempted infiltration over the past one week.

Mr. Hoon told the security-planners that Britain strongly felt the need to terminate cross-border infiltration in Jammu



**The British Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, with the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, in New Delhi on Thursday. — Reuters**

and Kashmir and that he had delivered this message in unequivocal terms to the Pakistan

President, Pervez Musharraf, during his stopover in Islamabad on Wednesday.

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# 'U.K will not tolerate raising funds for militancy'

By Sandeep Dikshit

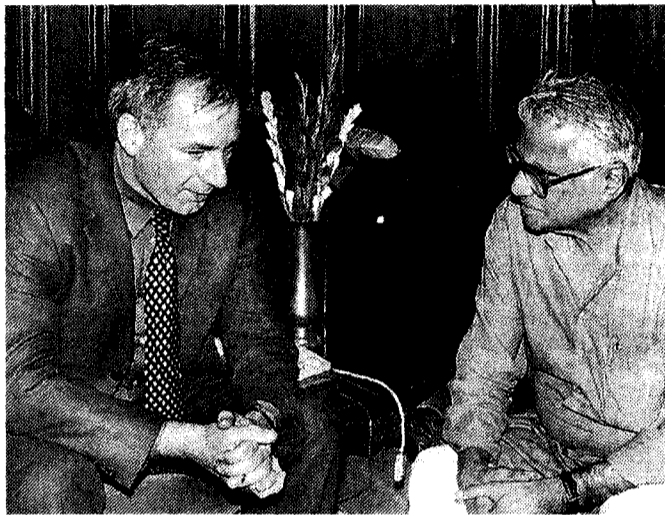
**NEW DELHI, JULY 3.** While counselling India to exercise restraint, Britain has asked Pakistan to effect significant reduction in cross-border infiltration into Jammu & Kashmir.

"It is important that Pakistan maintains its efforts to control cross-border terrorism... this remains a matter of great concern to the United Kingdom and (this) is something we strongly emphasised to the Government of Pakistan," the visiting British Defence Secretary, Geoffrey Hoon, told newsmen after an hour-long meeting with the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, shortly after arriving from Pakistan where he held talks with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf.

Asked to respond to reports that infiltration had picked up after a lull, he said "this is precisely why I emphasised the importance of the U.K. Government attaches to this issue. We want to see a significant reduction in infiltration across the Line of Control."

On reports about terrorist sympathisers collecting funds in Britain to sustain militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Hoon said, "this is not something we will tolerate. We have changed our laws specifically to give the police and authorities the power to deal with any organisation that is raising funds for the use of terrorists abroad".

Besides acquainting India



**The Defence Minister, George Fernandes, with the British Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, prior to a delegation-level meeting, in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI**

with the contents of his discussions with the Pakistani leadership, Mr. Hoon and Mr. Fernandes reviewed the prospects of peace in Afghanistan.

They also discussed strengthening of bilateral relations which "must evolve into a deeper partnership, particularly cooperation between the two militaries". "We had very full discussions on these matters," Mr. Hoon said.

Deeper military-to-military ties, including intelligence-sharing on the activities of various terrorist groups operating in the region, were touched upon in greater detail during delegation-level talks later in the day.

Accompanied by his

Defence Adviser, S.M.A. Lee, and the Chief of Defence Intelligence, Joe French, Mr. Hoon held discussions with an Indian team, comprising the Vice-Chief of Air Staff, S.G. Inamdar, Assistant Chief of Naval Staff, A. Tiwari, and other Defence Ministry officials.

It is understood that the \$1 billion deal for the purchase of British Advanced Jet Trainers also figured in the talks.

The British Defence Secretary is slated to meet the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Brajesh Mishra, and the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha.

He might also call upon the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee.

THE HINDU

3 JUL 2002

# Blair defends arms supplies to India, Pak.

By Hasan Suroor

**LONDON, JUNE 20.** The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has defended continuing British arms supplies to India and Pakistan following widespread criticism that it is in breach of the European Union criteria, which prohibit exports of arms to a region where there is a risk of a war.

Mr. Blair dismissed suggestions that the tension between India and Pakistan was exacerbated because both sides had British arms. The only thing that mattered, he said, was that Pakistan stopped its support to terrorism in Kashmir and India should offer dialogue on all issues. He was reacting to newspaper reports that his Government approved arms sales to India and Pakistan throughout the recent crisis, despite its own fears of a war breaking out in the region.

Although the British Government has consistently main-

tained that there is no embargo on arms supplies to the two countries, the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, was quoted as telling MPs last week that he did not recall approving a "single arms control licence in the past two months". This was contradicted by a report in *The Guardian* today which said that in response to a question in Parliament, the Trade Minister, Nick Griffiths, admitted that export licences relating to a wide range of military equipment were cleared between December and May this year.

The Opposition and anti-war group attacked the Government saying it was not consistent with its claim to be following an "ethical" foreign policy. "The Government policy towards arms exports to India and Pakistan in recent weeks has lacked coherence and appears to be in breach of its own criteria," the Liberal Democrat leader, Menzies Campbell, asked.



## HO-12 **Britain welcomes India's steps to ease border tension** 14/6

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 13.** Britain today welcomed India's "constructive steps" to ease border tension and said it wanted Pakistan to follow suit to end the scourge of terrorism.

"Our Government very much appreciates the constructive steps taken by the Indian Government and looks forward to further progress from Pakistan

on ending terrorism," the British High Commissioner, Rob Young told reporters after a 30-minute meeting with the Home Minister, L. K. Advani.

He said the visit by the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, to the Indian sub-continent had had its effect on reduction in Indo-Pakistan tensions. "We also briefly touched

upon the Kashmir issue," the British envoy said, but did not elaborate.

Mr. Advani's proposed three-day visit to Britain, scheduled for this month, was earlier cancelled due to the prevailing situation in the region. The postponement of the visit and fresh dates were discussed during the meeting. — PTI

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14 JUN 2002

# Direct ISI-terrorist link: Straw

By Hasan Suroor

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LONDON, JUNE 11. In a significant statement with mixed messages for both India and Pakistan, the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, has acknowledged that there is a "direct link" between Pakistan's intelligence agency, ISI, and some of the hardcore terrorist groups operating in Kashmir, but he also voiced concern over the "human rights deficit" in the State and the "conduct" of elections.

13/16  
The "Kashmir crisis" and the international campaign against terrorism would be an important item on the agenda of the G-8 Foreign Ministers' conference in Canada later this week, he said and warned that despite efforts to lower the tension in the region, the situation was still "precarious".

But in by far the most overt British endorsement of India's case on cross-border terrorism, Mr. Straw told the Commons that a number of Pakistan-based terrorist organisations, including

the Laskhar-e-Taiba, the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, whom he had banned when he was Home Secretary, had been "at the forefront of violent activity within the region" with large-scale incursion of armed militants into India from across the Line of Control.

"India has long charged that such terrorism has had the covert support of successive Pakistani governments, and in particular the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISID) in Pakistan. Her Majesty's Government accepts that there is a direct link between ISID and these groups," he said.

Mr. Straw recalled the wave of terrorist attacks on India in recent months, including the assault on Parliament and the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, and noted that despite the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's assurance in his January 12 speech that no organisation would be allowed to indulge in terrorism in the name of Kashmir, there was an "increase" in terrorist activity from early May.

THE LONDON

12 JUN 2002

## JACK STRAW TELLS PAKISTAN

# 'It is action that matters'

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, MAY 29. In evaluating the situation in the subcontinent, India and Britain today defined the first principles that could help put in place a durable mechanism for defusing military tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad in the future.

Government sources said the talks between the visiting British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, and his Indian interlocutors saw both sides determining common premises on which an effort to bring peace in the subcontinent could be mounted. Mr. Straw called on the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and held extensive discussions with the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, besides meeting the Union Home Minister, L. K. Advani, the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, and the National Security Adviser, Brajesh Mishra.

Mr. Singh and Mr. Straw shared near-identical views on the need for action by Pakistan to counter cross-border terrorism. Both sides agreed that Pakistan had to go beyond words

and demonstrate on the ground its seriousness in restraining cross-border terrorism.

"The test (of statements) is by action not words. There has to be measurement on the ground. The international community looks to Musharraf for implementation of promises made by him," Mr. Straw said in response to a question at a joint press conference with Mr. Singh this afternoon. While Gen. Musharraf was serious about controlling terrorism, "the test of all this is action not words."

### 'Terrorism cannot be disguised'

On more than one occasion, Mr. Straw said that contrary to Pakistan's assertions, terrorism could not be disguised as "freedom-fighting."

"The definition of terrorism has been laid down in international law and the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1373, which includes cross-border terrorism and terrorism labelled as freedom fight or freedom fighter-terrorism." He rejected Pakistan's call for international monitors to check infiltration



The British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in New Delhi on Wednesday.— Photo: V. Sudershan

along the Line of Control and stressed that the focus for resolution of Indo-Pakistani differences lay in bilateralism.

Sources pointed out that the British "tough line" might be a precursor to the possibility of economic measures against Pakistan, in case Islamabad does not address the question of cross-border terrorism urgent-

ly. But, having broken common ground with India, Britain hinted at the possibility of incremental reciprocation by New Delhi in case Pakistan initiated a phased action to curb cross-border terrorism.

The British proposal, which is likely to have the backing of the Americans, is expected to generate a serious debate in Government circles. Two lines of action can emerge. India, for instance, can either wait for a time-consuming proof of Pakistan "permanently and irreversibly" ending terrorism before responding positively or engage itself in a new quid pro quo mechanism of confidence-building with Islamabad.

Sources pointed out that the British stance as spelt out today is a response to contradictory pressures felt by London. Concerned about the global reach of terrorism, of which it can become a target, Britain, in its own self-interest, is not averse to India's coercive diplomacy if it can encourage Pakistan to eliminate sanctuaries of terrorism from its soil. That, in part, explains its unreserved backing of India on the counter-terrorism front. However, Britain would not like it if the Indian disposition leads to a war as it could derail the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan by encouraging Pakistan to push its forces away from the Afghan to the Indian border.

## U.S. wants Pak. follow-up

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MAY 29. The United States is looking for India and Pakistan to take necessary steps to ease tensions, including ending infiltration.

The State Department spokesman, Richard Boucher, today again called on the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, to follow up on his "positive statements" with action. "We are working with India and Pakistan, looking to them to take actions to ease tensions, and ending infiltration is one of them."

He said that Gen. Musharraf had laid out a "basic framework" of what he wanted to achieve in his January 12 speech. "He has made a number of serious comments since then. They were positive in

that he is going to end this infiltration, that he is not going to allow Pakistan-controlled territory to be used as a source of terrorism. We think these are positive statements which need to be followed up by action."

### Avert war: Koizumi

Amit Baruah reports from Singapore:

The Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, today urged his Indian counterpart, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to avert a war with Pakistan "by all means" and exercise restraint.

During a 20-minute telephone conversation, Mr. Vajpayee is said to have described the situation in South Asia as extreme and almost approaching a war.

He said he did not want a

war and would closely watch Pakistan's actions. "But I asked (Mr. Vajpayee) to avert a war by all means because such an effort will be important, not only to the Indian and Pakistani people, but also to those in the international community," Mr. Koizumi told reporters in Tokyo about his conversation.

On Thursday, Mr. Koizumi spoke to the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, after sending an envoy to Pakistan asking for prevention of terrorist activities.

"I asked Prime Minister Vajpayee to settle the problem peacefully through dialogue and to exercise self-restraint and leadership, despite differences between the two sides," the Kyodo news agency quoted Mr. Koizumi as saying.

## Straw meets Sonia

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MAY 29.** The visiting Foreign Secretary of U.K., Jack Straw, today called on the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, and invited on behalf of the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to visit the United Kingdom. He also apprised Ms. Gandhi of his discussions with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf.

The British High Commissioner, Rob Young, and senior members of the High Commission accompanied Mr. Straw. The CWC member, Natwar Singh, assisted Ms. Gandhi. Mr Straw reportedly told Ms. Gandhi that Mr. Blair and his Government were in favour of India and Pakistan resolving their differences bilaterally.

Ms. Gandhi conveyed to Mr. Straw India's over of cross-border terrorism and the violence in Jammu and Kashmir. Her party supported the Government in the standoff against Pakistan. It believed that the two countries would eventually have to settle their problems through negotiations.

Ms. Gandhi, who had visited the U. S. a year ago, already has invitations from the Governments of Russia and China. In fact, she was slated to visit China in the middle of June, but with the border crisis looming large, it appears that the visit might have to be postponed.

THE HINDU

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# U.K. defence chief apprised of situation

gandhi  
v.k.

By Sandeep Dikshit and Atul Aneja

**NEW DELHI, MAY 23.** Britain's defence chief, Michael Boyce, arrived here on Wednesday night to assess first hand the Indo-Pakistan military stand-off. During his engagements in South Block, he was given a presentation on the security situation, which included India's perception of cross-border terrorism being abetted by Pakistan.

Though Admiral Boyce's visit was scheduled much in advance and was to cover bilateral defence cooperation, the prevailing tension on the western border has imparted an added dimension to his tour of India and Nepal. His visit is also being interpreted here as an expression of Anglo-American diplomacy in the subcontinent that will include the visit to India next week of the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, and the tour of the subcontinent by the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, in early June. The European Union's Commissioner for External Affairs, Chris Patten, who is incidentally also a British citizen, arrives here on Friday.

Significantly, Britain's highest-ranking military officer has had the opportunity of interacting with senior-most military officers here and estimate the prevailing situation on the ground.

Besides the presentation by the Vice-Chief of Integrated Defence Staff, B. M. Kapur, Admiral Boyce called on the three service chiefs — Chief of Army Staff, S. Padmanabhan, Chief of Air Staff, S. Krishnaswamy, and Chief of Naval Staff, Madhvendra Singh. He might call on the Defence Min-

ister, George Fernandes, early tomorrow to exchange views on the security situation.

The original brief of Admiral Boyce was to explore areas where military ties could be intensified.

These included conducting a joint amphibious exercise and deploying a maritime aircraft at an Indian base for joint training. Britain is also keen on inviting Indian observers for training on joint campaign planning and theatre war-gaming.

The two sides are also looking at a deeper buyer-seller relationship, including acquisition of advanced jet trainers and resolving the concerns relating to U.S. equipment in Sea King helicopters and Sea Harrier aircraft.

The heightened Indo-Pak. tensions have naturally pushed these issues to the background.

## N-attack shelter

Visualising a threat of a nuclear strike, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), today announced that it has developed and supplied to the armed forces an integrated battlefield shelter to provide protection from nuclear as well as biological and chemical agents. They can be put to multifarious uses such as command post, observation post and communication centre.

The shelter is structurally strong to withstand 7.5 mt circular pressure for the earth covered portions and 15 mt longitudinal pressures for portions not covered by the earth, said a Defence Ministry announcement.

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## QUICKTAKES

### Air Marshal Bhatia removed from command

**NEW DELHI:** Air Marshal Vinod Bhatia, air officer commanding-in-chief western air command has been removed from command after a court of inquiry indicted him for violating the LoC and straying into PoK on Feb 19. Though Bhatia has been shifted to the post of Inspector General (flight safety), he will retain his commander-in-chief status. — **ENS SEE PG 2**

### Shahnawaz security

**NEW DELHI:** Civil Aviation Minister Shahnawaz Hussain was today provided 'Z' category security by the Union Home Ministry following upgradation of threat perception for him. — **PTI**

### George's visit

**NEW DELHI:** Ahead of next month's crucial Loya Jirga (grand tribal assembly) in Afghanistan, the Defence Minister George Fernandes is leaving tonight on an unannounced visit to central Asian Republic of Tajikistan. — **PTI**

### Plea accepted

**ROPAR:** A local court today accepted the plea of Jagman Singh, a key associate of arrested Punjab Public Service

## UK adds Kashmir insult to Modi injury

■ J&K polls should be held with external monitors, says Jack Straw in his Parliament, raises Gujarat too

**JYOTI MALHOTRA**  
 NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

**A**PPARENTLY provoked by New Delhi's angry reaction to its criticism on Gujarat, the British government seems to be striking back by linking the "communal violence" in that state to the threat of returning the disputed status of Kashmir to the international agenda.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, while answering several questions in his Parliament last week, went on to suggest a possible, future "role for observers, un-



der the auspices of the UN" along the Line of Control with Pakistan and even demanded that the prospective elections in Jammu & Kashmir be held in a climate of "peace and security and with proper facilities for external monitors."

The British statements have so infuriated New Delhi that outgoing High Commissioner to Britain Nareshwar Dayal brought it up during his farewell call with Straw a few days ago, objecting not only to the voluntary linkage between Gujarat and Kashmir but also to London's perceived efforts to internationalise, once again,

### 'Partisan, not diplomatic'

*External Affairs ministry spokesperson Nirupama Rao had some very harsh words for foreign missions which have been "deliberately leaking" their internal reports on the Gujarat situation.*

■ Some foreign countries and missions in Delhi are injecting themselves into the highly politically charged internal debate in the country and are creating an impression of playing a partisan role

■ We note with regret that some foreign missions in India continue to interfere in the already vigorous democratic debate going on in our country

■ This is an entirely internal affair. There is absolutely no need or any case for external interference

the Kashmir issue.

Official sources here said that Dayal would also raise the matter with the British permanent undersecretary Michael Jay when he sees him some days from now.

Back in Delhi, the MEA spokesperson Nirupama Rao issued a strong reaction condemning the criticism of foreign governments on Gujarat. "Some foreign countries and missions in Delhi are injecting themselves into the highly politically charged internal debate in the country and are creating an impression of playing a partisan role," she said.

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## Gujarat high-risk, stay away: US, UK, Canada

**RAKESH SINHA**  
 NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

**NEW Delhi** may construe noises on Gujarat as "interference" in India's affairs but that has not prevented governments in major world capitals from warning their nationals to either steer clear or exercise great caution in travelling to the state.

In no hurry to reword mandatory travel advisories, governments are still describing the situation in Gujarat as "volatile" and where "potential exists for renewed violence."

Some like New Zealand have

included Gujarat, the new entry from India after Jammu and Kashmir, in a no-no list of troubled regions and countries, advising against all travel. In short, travelling to Sasan-Gir, the last home of the Asiatic lion, is now as risky as roaming the Aceh countryside or the Chechen mountains because that's the league post-Godhra Gujarat has joined.

The US State department, which put out a public announcement on India on March 13, issued another two weeks later — exactly a month after the

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## Party prevails, Sinha will eat his reforms words tomorrow

■ Rollback expected on tax rebate, interest rates; LPG cut unlikely

**AMITAV RANJAN**  
 NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

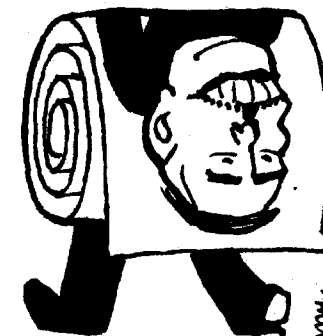
**GIVING** in to pressure from the party, the government will announce a partial rollback in budget proposals on Friday ahead of the crucial vote on Gujarat in Parliament on April 30.

Sources said the amendments to the Finance Bill 2002 were broadly finalised by the Prime Minister in consultation with Finance Minister Yashwanth Sinha today.

The introduction of the

subsidies on LPG and fertilisers and a rollback of excise duty on certain small-scale sector items.

Similar demands had also



Sources said the rollback would be limited to tax rebate available to assesses with a gross income between Rs 1.5 lakh and Rs 5 lakh on investments made in tax-saving instruments as well as a lowering of excise duty on certain small scale industries.

However, Sinha's speech would also include tax benefits to special economic zones and software parks announced in the Exim Policy.

He is also expected to announce a reduction in excise duty on diesel and petrol—without any change in retail