

Timing is all, says Prime Minister on birthday

BJP chafes at poll date wait

RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

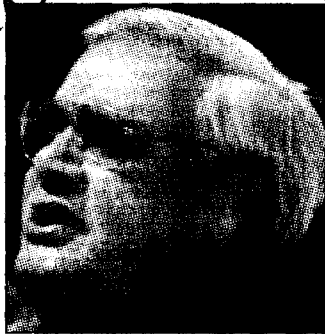
New Delhi, Dec. 25: The suspense over the general elections would end next month as all indications point towards polls as early as end-April 2004 or early May, top BJP sources said today.

The issue cropped up at a meeting of the party's central office-bearers, attended by deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani. They were told the matter would be discussed threadbare at the national executive in Hyderabad on January 11 and 12 and a final decision taken.

Sources said if early polls are decided on, the Prime Minister (reciting his poems in PTI picture) could recommend dissolution of Parliament "any time" after Makar Sankranti is celebrated on January 14. According to the Hindu calendar, a "propitious" period starts thereafter.

With signs of Kalyan Singh returning and a growing perception that uncertain states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have got a leg-up, Vajpayee told party workers on his birthday today that "time is important".

After the office-bearers' meeting, BJP general secretary Pramod Mahajan said: "Some felt the uncertainty over poll timing should end. They said every day a ball is bowled. Sometimes we are told 250 balls will be bowled, at times it is 225. They



said this uncertainty would not give them time to make plans."

Advani told the members that Atal Bihari Vajpayee was expected to seek feedback from the party, discuss it in Hyderabad and then make up his mind.

Vajpayee's mood, sources said, was to go for elections on schedule in September, but the BJP's recent Assembly poll sweep had prompted him to take note of the "general churning" in the party.

"There was a feeling among BJP supporters that we will benefit from early polls. But someone has to make an assessment at a proper forum and the national executive will do it," a source said.

The other impetus is the pressure from key allies, Andhra Pradesh's Telugu Desam Party and Maharashtra's Shiv Sena, which want simultaneous general and Assembly polls.

Dismissing a theory that Vajpayee is keen on earning a place in history as the only non-Congress Prime Minister to last five years, sources said the only factor he could consider is the budget.

"Will the budget be beneficial? This will be weighed against the perception that conditions are favourable for us, the Congress is in disarray. The other imponderable is a bad monsoon," a source said.

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Kalyan leaves lips smacking

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 25: Officially, the BJP's response to Kalyan Singh's possible homecoming was cautious, but privately its leaders sounded delighted that the tattered Uttar Pradesh unit would get a blood infusion.

Speaking after a meeting of the BJP's central office-bearers today, general secretary Pramod Mahajan said: "I am not aware of anything regarding Kalyan Singh."

The comment was made in the context of a statement by Kalraj Mishra, in charge of Uttar Pradesh on behalf of the central leadership, that Kalyan's presence by the Prime Minister's side at a function in Lucknow yesterday was "not coincidental" but an "expression of his wish to return to the BJP".

Mahajan said: "What Kalraj told the media may be his personal opinion. Kalyan called on the Prime Minister on the eve of his birthday to greet him, we do not read anything more."

He said the issue did not figure in the meeting today.

BJP sources, however, said caution was their byword because they did not want the "Kalyan homecoming" project to be aborted before he goes through the motions of consulting his MLAs and office-bearers at a meeting he has called in Lucknow on January 4.

Kalyan's Rashtriya Kranti Dal is part of the Mulayam

Singh Yadav government and has two ministers holding key portfolios.

He is expected to withdraw them, pull out of the government and announce his party's merger with the BJP. BJP sources expected the pre-merger ritual to take place after January 4.

The sources said the main reason for the circumspection was that the exercise of getting Kalyan back was conceptualised and executed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee himself through his Lucknow constituency minder and long-time personal aide Shiv Kumar.

Uttar Pradesh BJP leader Lalji Tandon, otherwise a confidant of the Prime Minister, was roped in after the groundwork was done.

Kalyan expressed his wish to greet Vajpayee at the Lucknow function, organised by Tandon on the eve of his 79th birthday. Once Tandon conveyed this to Vajpayee, the Prime Minister gave the go-ahead.

Kalyan was reportedly peeved at Mulayam giving him a wide berth after getting the numbers to secure the Samajwadi Party-led government.

Samajwadi general secretary Amar Singh, who spoke on the anti-terror law case against MLA Raja Bhaiyya today, refused to respond to Kalyan's possible return to the BJP.

"No comment," he said, adding: "Now Kalyan is praising the Prime Minister, earlier he was abusing him."

PMO's lapse

Vajpayee's atonement must be meaningful

The belated announcement of a CBI inquiry into the killing of Satyendra Dubey, an IIT-trained engineer of the National Highway Authority in Gaya by Bihar mafia gangs, shows just how casually the Prime Minister is treating the case. It is almost as if the announcement is aimed at ensuring that Atal Behari Vajpayee's spin doctors have a plausible cover — "Ah, but the matter is with the CBI" — to offer for the criminal lapse that led to his death. Dubey died for exposing how the construction mafia was "looting hundreds of crores of rupees of public funds" by supplying inferior material for the construction of the Golden Quadrilateral project. That an upright and conscientious engineer had to pay with his life for telling Vajpayee how his pathbreaking plan of linking four major metros with superhighways was being sabotaged by corrupt officials in cahoots with contractors reveals the vulnerability of an honest man.

The blame for Dubey's killing lies squarely with the Prime Minister's office as it showed a complete insensitivity to his "earnest request" that his identity be kept secret. He was afraid that any breach may cost his life. That Dubey had gone beyond the call of duty in the nation's interest was, unfortunately, never appreciated. The PMO chose not to realise, despite Dubey's written request, the serious nature and implications of his complaint. Not only did it not keep his request but even circulated the complaint to all the relevant ministries and also to those officials of the highway authority against whom Dubey had levelled serious and specific charges of corruption. It was clearly a case of betrayal of trust. Dubey's tragic end has raised serious questions: how could the office of the country's chief executive, instead of protecting and promoting an honest officer, throw him to the wolves? What the PMO ought to have done is to order a secret enquiry, what it did was to make Dubey the target. Ultimately, Dubey's death will have to be on Vajpayee's conscience — that is where the buck stops. More appropriate than a CBI enquiry — which at best can reveal the identities of those who make up the corrupt system and then allow them to wriggle through its loopholes — would be for the Prime Minister to announce just how he plans to revamp his office in order to ensure that another Satyendra Dubey does not come to grief. This is the least that Vajpayee can do to atone.

PM tells new CMs: perform or we perish

SF
10/12
Sudesh K Verma in New Delhi

Dec. 9. — The Prime Minister today gave the three new BJP chief ministers 100 days to provide immediate relief to the people and live up to their expectations. A no-nonsense Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee virtually read out the riot act to Ms Uma Bharati, Ms Vasundhara Raje and Dr Raman Singh, along with the other three BJP CMs — Mr Manohar Parikkar (Goa), Mr Arjun Munda (Jharkhand) and Mr Narendra Modi (Gujarat).

He told them to prioritise their states' development needs and set short and long-term goals. The message, in short: "Time's running short and you must deliver."

Addressing the BJP parliamentary party meeting, Mr Vajpayee said people would rate the BJP in the next polls on the basis of the Centre's achievements and the BJP-run state governments' performance. He cautioned: "*Vijay mili, vishram nahin.*"

Mr Vajpayee indicated that the CMs would not be allowed to fritter away the

mandate sought in the name of development. All the three new CMs attributed their success to the Centre's good work and Mr Vajpayee's personal charisma. He addressed around a dozen rallies. Mr Vajpayee asked them to remain cautious against attempts to "pollute the atmosphere". The opposition hasn't liked the mandate, he warned.

At another meeting with the six CMs and Mr LK Advani, held at Mr M Venkaiah Naidu's residence, he indicated funds would not be a constraint if developmental tasks were undertaken in right earnest. He asked the six to utilise Central funds, something not being done in Congress-ruled states.

This was one of the few occasions when the Prime Minister attended a party meeting at Mr Naidu's residence.

In the Lok Sabha, the three BJP CMs were given a rousing reception by Treasury bench members, but the Opposition cried foul. Congress MPs objected to their sitting on the front row and Mr Mani Shankar Aiyer quipped they should sit on the back bench. CPI-M MPs said there was no need for the new CMs to arrive in a procession.

Officials ask Advani to limit statements on J&K

By Siddharth Varadarajan
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Senior officials formulating the Centre's approach towards the Hurriyat have urged Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani not to make public statements which might derail the proposed dialogue before it even begins.



L.K. Advani

The unusual request was made days after Mr Advani announced on October 24 that the landmark dialogue would only be about "decentralisation" of power. The remark drew an immediate response from Hurriyat leaders,

with the Mirwaiz declaring the new initiative a "fraud". "We barely had time to be stunned ourselves when phone calls started coming from Srinagar saying 'Deputy Prime Minister ne yeh kya kar diya' (what's this DPM has done)," an official told TNN.

Matters cooled only after assurances were provided to the Mirwaiz and Hurriyat chief Abbas Ansari that Mr Advani's comment "was not in sync with what the Prime Minister had in mind".

Peeved by this policy incoherence at the highest levels, the inter-agency group, tasked with preparing for the Hurriyat talks, met with Mr Advani in his office on October 29.

Sources say that some of the officials expressed their unhappiness at the "decentralisation" comment.

They said such comments were unhelpful as they provide a handle to hardline elements. "Since Mr Advani makes several public speeches a week, it's important he realises the effect of such statements," an official said later.

Among those in attendance were Intelligence Bureau (IB) director K.P. Singh, Re-

search and Analysis Wing (RAW) chief C.D. Sahay, the Centre's Kashmir interlocutor N.N. Vohra, home secretary N. Gopalaswami, OSD in the Prime Minister's Office and former RAW chief A.S. Dulat, cabinet secretary Kamal Pande, and officials from the external affairs ministry.

According to North Block sources, Mr Advani initially struck a defensive tone, arguing there was nothing wrong in the home minister "talking about the unity and integrity of India", especially when he has to address different type of audiences. But eventually he did concede there was a danger of signals getting crossed.

"The decentralisation announcement made no sense from the constitutional angle", an official said. "Article 258, which speaks of the Centre conferring powers on states in certain cases, hasn't even been extended to Jammu and Kashmir." Another official questioned the wisdom of offering the Hurriyat 'decentralisation' when the Centre had rejected the National Conference's demand for 'autonomy'. "It's a bit like waving a red rag", he said.

CENTRAL RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM
It is hereby notified that the work at Sr. No. 1 to 8 published under open tender notice No. Engg/Sr. DEN (CO) BB/2003/33 of 20.10.2003 due for opening on 28.11.2003 is postponed to 11.12.2003 due to administration reasons. All other terms and conditions remain unchanged. IP (434)

Prime Minister asks vanquished rivals not to lose heart after triple drubbing

Atal needles Congress with pep talk



Tony Blair with A.B. Vajpayee at the Commonwealth summit. The two leaders agreed on a role for the UN in Iraq. Blair will send a special envoy next month for talks with Brajesh Mishra. (Reuters) ■ See Page 7

ASHIS CHAKRABARTI

Abuja (Nigeria), Dec. 6: Far from native shores, Atal Bihari Vajpayee seems to be still savouring the election victories at home. It's time for him to be generous on a dispirited Opposition — which could well be his way of rubbing the Congress wounds.

To a small group of the Indian community, which came to see the Prime Minister lay the foundation of the new Indian embassy in the Nigerian capital here, Vajpayee was expansive and advised the Opposition (read the Congress) not to lose heart at its stunning defeats in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.

"Some people" were "surprised" at the election results, but in a democracy "people come and go". The Opposition, he said, is a part of the government in a democracy.

"I had been in the Opposition for 50 years. The Opposition is paid to criticise the government." The dig, rather than the platitude, drew an applause from the small audience.

That Vajpayee was on a high over the poll victories

was apparent even when he met the accompanying Indian delegation on the special Air-India flight shortly before his departure for Abuja day before yesterday.

He spoke with the media for longer than usual for the pre-departure conversation. Actually, he seemed keen to talk more on the elections, but questions on Pakistan cut the conversation short.

But he continues to be in a relaxed mood. Before laying the foundation for the new Indian embassy here this afternoon, he recalled that no Indian Prime Minister had visited Nigeria for the past 40 years.

"But it isn't even five years I have been Prime Minister. It would be unfair to blame me for what had happened in the past 40 years," he quipped.

He, however, made it clear that India was preparing to enlarge and improve its relations with Nigeria, which is India's largest trading partner in Africa. He also announced that Air-India was planning to introduce commercial flights between New Delhi and Lagos, Nigeria's main commercial city and its capital until 1991. Air-India would thus be reintroducing its Nigerian connection after 16 years.

Tour has boosted bilateral ties: PM

Damascus: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Sunday concluded his visit to Russia, Tajikistan and Syria saying it has given a fresh impetus to bilateral cooperation with these "important countries" in regions of great political, economic and strategic significance for India. Before emplaning for home, he spoke about the gains of the visit and allayed Arab apprehensions declaring India's firm commitment to the West Asia peace process on the basis of full implementation of UN resolutions and the 'land for peace' principle.

Mr Vajpayee, who held extensive talks with Syrian President Basher Al Assad on the situation in West Asia and Iraq, said, "We remain concerned at the continuing cycle of violence and counter-violence in the region. "I reiterated India's continued commitment to the West Asia peace process, and to a comprehensive and lasting peace, based on full implementation of the relevant UN security council resolutions, and the land for peace principle." "Winding up his six-day tour, Mr Vajpayee said it has strengthened bilateral relations with Russia, Tajikistan and Syria.

"Our strategic partnership with Russia not only encompasses our political, economic, defence and cultural cooperation, it is also an important element in our efforts for a multipolar world order," Mr Vajpayee said.

On his talks with President Assad,



Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, his Syrian counterpart Mohamad Naji Otri (left) and other delegates look at a model of the Omayyad mosque in Damascus on Sunday.

Mr Vajpayee said the two sides had agreed to set up a group of experts to make specific recommendations on areas for bilateral cooperation with Syria showing particular interest in expanding Indian presence in hydrocarbons, fertilisers, power generation, irrigation as well as information technology and biotechnology sectors.

Observing that his visit here served to re-establish high-level contact with a traditionally friendly country, the

Prime Minister said they agreed that the economic and commercial relations need to be developed extensively to raise them to a level commensurate with bilateral political relations. New vistas of cooperation have emerged with the economic change in both the countries, he said, adding "India-Syria relationship was based on historical links, and our common position in international fora, including the non-aligned movement." PTI

Serious crisis in Iraq, says PM

By Amit Baruah

40-1
19/11

MOSCOW, Nov. 13. The Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, said today that the "serious crisis" in Iraq called for "immediate steps" from the United Nations, but the "principal responsibility" for dealing with the situation lay with the United States.

Mr. Vajpayee, who arrives in Damascus, Syria, from Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on Friday night, said that innocent people were becoming victims in Iraq. "There is violence, people are being killed," he said at a reception for the Indian community.

In what were, perhaps, his most detailed comments on Iraq on foreign soil, Mr. Vajpayee said that India and some big countries had different approaches to the issue. Without referring to the U.S. and Britain directly, he said India's views were in line with those of countries (a possible reference to Russia, France and Germany).

On the U.S. request to India to send troops to Iraq, the Prime Minister said that Washington had been informed that New

Delhi had its "own difficulties" in dispatching its military personnel. One, the threat on India's borders and, two, concerns over internal security.

"*Ham aap par aane vale sankat ki chinta karen ya apni chinta ki chinta karen*" (Should we be worried about America's problems or be guided by our own concerns), the Prime Minister asked.

India was a massive country and there was some problem somewhere or the other. "Internal security is very important to us. We had to tell our friends that it was not possible to send troops to Iraq. They understood our difficulties." Now a dangerous situation existed in Iraq. "We hope that the problems there will be resolved," he maintained. Parliament had passed a unanimous resolution that the country should remain out of the "mess" (*jhamela*) in Iraq.

The Prime Minister said he was heading a coalition Government, adding that even on such a big issue as Iraq the country was one. Both opponents and friends understood that "one person" did not take decisions on

crucial issues in India. "Everyone decides together," with the Government consulting the Opposition, he said. It was the Opposition's job to "oppose" and the Government's "raj dharma" to govern.

The Prime Minister said that India's relations with Russia had flowered, irrespective of the party holding power in New Delhi. Despite the changes in the world, India-Russia friendship held firm and both countries contributed to global peace and stability. His visit to Russia was "successful, useful and helpful", and the areas covered included defence, science and technology and trade. "We call our friendship strategic partnership," he said. "We can rely on them [Russians] and they can rely on us [Indians]."

India was emerging as an economic power. There was, he said, using an English phrase in his Hindi address, a "feel good" factor about India. To much merriment, he said he could not translate this English phrase into Hindi.

Joint statement on terror: Page 11

No need for war to win polls: PM

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 2. — A war-like situation is not necessary for the BJP-led NDA to win elections, Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee has said.



The Prime Minister told senior armed forces officers that recent efforts to make peace with Pakistan have silenced those who believe the BJP-led NDA needs a

“harsh Pakistan policy” to win votes. Coming down strongly on those who believe that only warmongering will ensure victory for the BJP in the coming polls, the Prime Minister said: “By our recent measures, we have silenced the whispering campaign that the requirements of forthcoming elections dictate a harsh Pakistan policy.” He said he was aware that far more people in the country favour peace with Pakistan than those who favour “hostility”.

Mr Vajpayee, speaking at the combined commanders conference yesterday, said the government had announced measures to promote “greater people-to-people interaction, cultural exchanges, and economic cooperation”. He said it was important to encourage those in Pakistan who realise that permanent

514 8/11 Pervez rakes up J&K

BEIJING, Nov. 2. — The Pakistani President today raised the Kashmir issue in China, saying the long-standing conflict of Palestine and Kashmir were among the issues of “utmost concern”. He expressed the hope that the upcoming Saarc summit in Islamabad would provide a fresh impetus to commercial and economic cooperation in South Asia.

“Of utmost concern is the globalisation of terror, unresolved crises in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Korean peninsula as well as the long-standing conflict of occupation of Palestine and Kashmir,” Gen. Pervez Musharraf said in his key-note speech at the second annual summit of Boao forum for Asia in the picturesque Boao city in Hainan.

The Boao forum for Asia, established in 2001 is touted as “Asia’s Davos”. India is being represented there by Mr IK Gujral and the ambassador to China, Mr Nalin Surie.

— PTI

hostility towards India is mere folly.

Extracts of the Prime Minister’s speech yesterday was released by the defence ministry today. In the same speech, he pointed out that cross-border terrorism would be dealt with firmly and a meaningful dialogue with Pakistan is only possible when Islamabad seriously begins working to stop cross-border infiltration by terrorists and also, closes down the terrorist training camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir.

Sky is limit for Asia's growth: PM

Floats idea of broader economic community, offers free flight rights

By Priya Ranjan Dash
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bali: Having wrapped up a blueprint agreement for a free trade area (FTA) with the ten-member Asean, a combined market of 500 million people, in a record time of ten months, India on Wednesday sowed the seeds of a much more ambitious idea—that of a broader Asian Economic Community.

In a take-off from the agreement reached among the Asean countries on Monday to establish an Asean Economic Community by 2020, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Wednesday proposed at the Asean-India summit meeting here that a bigger Asian economic community be created taking 14 countries—the Asean 10, India, China, Japan and Korea—together.

At another level that is of immediate consequence, Mr Vajpayee also made other offers to the Asean heads of government, including India's willingness to throw open its skies to designated airlines from the Asean countries without asking for reciprocal flying and landing rights. Under this "open sky arrangement", airlines from Asean countries would be allowed to operate daily flights to four Indian metros, Indian officials said. There will also be no restrictions on the number of flights to 18 Indian tourist centres.

The PM's offer was quickly lapped up by the Singapore and Malaysian PMs.

On increasing India-Asean connectivity, Mr Vajpayee also talked about a number of road and rail projects in the pipeline. He proposed an India-Asean motor car rally to demonstrate the geographi-

cal continuity of the land mass from north-east India to Hanoi. This was welcomed by his Malaysian counterpart.

Mr Vajpayee also underlined the importance India attaches to the preparation of the India-Asean Vision-2020 document. Over the next one year to the India-Asean summit in Laos, officials, think-tanks, businesspersons and others on both sides will deliberate on the vision document, so that it can be adopted there.

The PM referred to the recent WTO agreement on relaxing the patent regime for providing easier access to medicines for public health and this was welcomed by the Asean leaders.



China changes stand on Sikkim

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bali: Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao on Wednesday drew Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's attention to a crucial change effected in the website of China's foreign ministry. Sikkim used to come after Singapore on its list of "independent countries", but the name of the Indian state no longer figures there as of Monday.

● Detailed report on Page 5

'India won't succumb to blackmail'

By Chidanand Rajghatta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

United Nations (New York): India will not talk to Pakistan as long as it uses terrorism as a tool of blackmail, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee told the United Nations on Thursday.

In the bluntest, most public rejection yet of Pakistan's attempts to force talks on the Kashmir issue, Mr Vajpayee said, "We totally refuse to let terrorism become a tool of blackmail. Just as the world did not negotiate with Al Qaida or the Taliban, we shall not negotiate with terrorism."

He prefaced the rejection by pointing out that Gen Pervez Musharraf had

made a public admission for the first time before the UN on Wednesday that Pakistan was sponsoring terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. After claiming that there was an indigenous struggle in Kashmir, he (Gen Musharraf) had offered to encourage a general cessation of violence within Kashmir, in return "for reciprocal obligations and restraints".

In effect, Mr Vajpayee suggested Gen Musharraf was using terrorism to force India to the negotiating table. Talking to Pakistan under the circumstances would be betraying the people of Jammu and Kashmir, who had defied a most ferocious campaign of violence and intimidation sponsored from across the border and participated in an election

which had been universally hailed as free and fair, he said.

The election was an unequivocal expression of both determination and self-determination, he added.

"When cross-border terrorism stops or when we eradicate it, we can have a dialogue with Pakistan on the other issues between us," the Prime Minister, who spoke in Hindi, offered.

He also mocked the general's shrill attempt during his US visit to seek parity with India, saying "he should not confuse the legitimate aspiration for equality of nations with outmoded concepts of military parity".

● US berates Musharraf, Page 14

'Terror lies beyond Afghan soil'

Press Trust of India
New York, September 22

DECLARING THAT India is capable of winning its war against terrorism aided and abetted from across the border, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Monday asked the international community to combat the menace with roots not only in Afghanistan, but in some other countries, too. The Prime Minister was addressing about 4,000 members of the Indian community in New York. Without naming Pakistan, the Prime Minister said, "India is trying to have peace with its neighbours. We're confronting terrorism from across the border. We're capable of fighting the war against terrorism and we'll definitely win it. We want to remind the world that there are roots of terrorism in some other countries, too, besides Afghanistan."

Stressing that the world had realised the scourge of terrorism only after the 9/11 attacks on the United States, Vajpayee said India had been in the forefront of the fight against international terrorism. "But we want the international community to play its role in fighting the devil of terrorism."

The Prime Minister asked the Indian diaspora in the US to set up an action group that could project the country's perspective on Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and counter anti-India propaganda based on



Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee recites his poems at a reception in New York on Sunday.

half-truths.

"Most reports published here are sent by foreign reporters who do not have full information about the facts. Since you are aware of the reality about India, you can put the facts in their proper perspective," Vajpayee told the gathering at the Jacob K Javits Centre in Manhattan in his first public engagement since his arrival in New York on Saturday.

Stressing that India's relations with the US had improved in several areas, especially in the economic field, during the past few years, he

said, however, the cooperation had not come upto the desired level and urged the Indian community to play an effective role in furthering bilateral ties.

He also asked the Indians to contribute effectively in the process of making India a developed nation by 2020, while maintaining their loyalty to the land of their adoption.

"We're not inviting only you as investors. We want you to contribute as much as possible in making India a developed nation." Vajpayee also regretted that the influence of the Indian community in the American political and administrative set-up was not reflected in proportion to the prestige they had gained in US society.

Observing that India, especially his government, had taken several measures to maintain a relationship with the diaspora, he said steps had been initiated to implement the decision to give dual citizenship to them in some countries, including the US.

A Bill to this effect had been introduced in Parliament, he said, expressing the hope that it would be passed soon.

A life insurance scheme is being introduced for Indian labourers working in the Gulf and the South-East Asian countries. A scheme to provide education to the children of NRIs — and of Indian origin — was also being introduced, the Prime Minister added.

PM mum on troops for Iraq

9 PM XRS-1779

'India's decision will depend on what the world body decides'

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, September 16

EVEN AS the US is working hard to ensure a greater UN role in Iraq - though on its terms - Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee on Tuesday chose to be non-committal on Indian troops deployment in the war-ravaged nation.

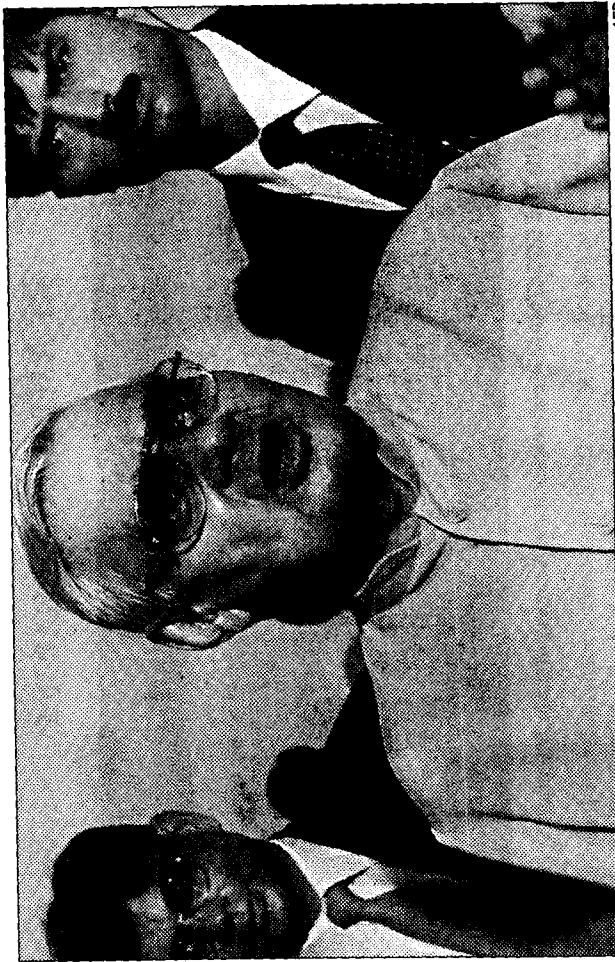
The Prime Minister, who left for Turkey in the morning on his two-nation tour that takes him later to New York to address the UN General Assembly, said at the airport that India's decision on troops deployment in Iraq would depend on what the world body decides.

Emphasising on the importance of the high-level discussions at the 191-member organisation, Vajpayee remarked that since the role of the world body had been called into question during the recent developments, the ensuing UN session assumed added importance.

"We will discuss the extent of the UN's role in maintaining world peace by carrying all its member nations together", he asserted.

In a statement issued ahead of his departure, the Prime Minister indicated that his presence at the UN General Assembly would provide him with an opportunity to exchange views on several issues concerning the world community.

Vajpayee, who is expected



NOTHING TO DECLARE: Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee gestures as he addresses the media at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International airport before leaving for Turkey on Tuesday.

India on Monday had ruled out any kind of meeting between Vajpayee and Pervez Musharraf, or any other bilateral meeting between the two sides, on the sidelines of the forthcoming UN General Assembly session.

It also appeared cold to moves by Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri to visit India to hand over an invitation to Vajpayee for the Saarc summit in Islamabad in January next year.

External Affairs Minister

Yashwant Sinha had told *Hindustan Times* in an interview, "Foreign Ministers normally don't go around handing invitations to heads of government."

Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal said the Saarc standing committee of foreign secretaries had already finalised the dates that were known to all member countries.

War against international terrorism, the West Asian crisis, developments in Iraq, efforts by the US to push

PM'S ITINERARY

▶ War against terrorism, the West Asian crisis and developments in Iraq are expected to come up for debate at the UN General Assembly session.

▶ While Prime Minister Vajpayee is likely to meet Presidents of the US and Russia, there is no plan to meet Musharraf

▶ In Turkey, the PM is likely to discuss greater trade ties and the terrorist threat to India and Turkey, two friendly democracies

through a fresh UN resolution for a multilateral force in Iraq, Afghanistan and the WTO summit's failure at Cancun, apart from revitalising the world body for an effective role across the globe, are expected to come up for debate at the UN General Assembly session. The Prime Minister's three-day engagement in Turkey is expected to be dominated by greater trade ties and discussions on the terrorist threat to two friendly democratic countries.

'STEP-BY-STEP IS OUR APPROACH'

Terrorist attacks should stop: PM

By Luv Puri

JAMMU, AUG. 29. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, said today that there cannot be any headway in normalising relations between India and Pakistan until terrorist violence aided from across the border comes to a halt. Talking to reporters at the end of his three-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Vajpayee seemed visibly upset over the continuing violence in the State and said that it was holding back the two countries starting an exercise of meaningful dialogue.

The Prime Minister expressed deep concern over the situation on the Line of Control and within the State. "I cannot say why Pakistan is treading this path and, as for any meaningful talks is concerned, the support from across the border to terrorist-related activity has to end permanently," he said.

Agreeing with the perception that on the ground the terrorist infrastructure across the LoC remained intact and their communication aiding the terrorists within India was still active, Mr. Vajpayee said: "Normalcy is still to return to the State and incidents like the Srinagar attack are ample proof of it. The support from across the border should cease and a conducive environment should be created for the talks to start."

About the proposal from some quarters that violence and dialogue can go hand in hand, the Prime Minister said: "At the Line of Control terrorist activity continues. We cannot stop everything that is happening within the State. Pakistan denies its support to terrorists. We have

no other option but to find the reasons if there is some grain of truth in these statements. We are slow in the dialogue process but this is the right approach. Policy has to be slow and step by step." At the same time, he underscored the fact that his offer for a sincere dialogue with Pakistan still stood and that he was willing to wait for more time for a change in the ground reality "which in many ways is linked with the Pakistan establishment."

He recalled the positives of his latest peace offer. "I had first extended the hand of friendship to Pakistan in Lahore, then in Agra and this is the third time. Diplomatic exchange between the two sides has taken place. Attempts are being made to restore air service but there are some obstacles. I am hopeful they would be weeded out."

He stressed the need to improve trade ties between the two nations.

The Prime Minister talked of an internal dialogue within the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

On the latest offer of talks by the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, Mr. Vajpayee said that "Advaniji has accepted the offer of talks with the Hurriyat. Now, the Hurriyat should not come with conditions. It is the Central Government which has to decide whom they are going to assign the task of talking to them. This is the right approach in any dialogue process." On the Hurriyat's insistence on formal talks, he said: "Do not get tied with the terminology of formal-informal. Let there be talks started at some level and obviously then we can proceed."

'I am fit and fine': Page 11

THE HINDU

30 AUG 2003

10/16/8
'OUR FREQUENT INITIATIVES ARE NO SIGN OF WEAKNESS'

Walk with us on the road to peace, PM tells Pak.

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, AUG. 15. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today invited Pakistan "to walk together with India on the road to peace" and to abjure "its anti-India outlook" because "the people of both countries wish to live in peace". Mr. Vajpayee told Pakistan not to mistake "our frequent initiatives to normalise relations" as a sign of weakness and added that Islamabad's sincerity would be tested by its preparedness "to stop cross-border terrorism totally".

The Prime Minister was addressing the nation for the sixth consecutive time from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the occasion of Independence Day. Mr. Vajpayee permitted himself a moment of self-congratulation when he pointed out that the National Democratic Alliance Government had completed five years. "All previous experiments in running coalition Governments at the Centre had failed. We have succeeded," he noted.

In his 30-minute speech in Hindi, the Prime Minister said that India stood tall and proud in the comity of nations and there was all-round prosperity and affluence. According to him, the world saluted India as the largest democracy, as an emerging global economic power, as the confluence of a modern nation and an ancient civilisation, and as a powerful country dedicated to peace.

Admitting that the road to peace with Pakistan would be bumpy, Mr. Vajpayee emphasised the need nonetheless to begin the journey. As he put it, "let us open some new doors, new windows, and new light-holes in the walls that divide us".

By participating in the free and fair Assembly elections, the

people of Jammu and Kashmir had "rebuffed terrorism from across the border," he said and declared that India would not be divided a second time on communal lines in the name of "right to self-determination". He noted the gradual integration of the people of Kashmir with the rest of the country and said that mobile telephone services would be made available from next week in the State.

Mr. Vajpayee told the nation that his Government was alive to its responsibility to "provide equal opportunities" to the disadvantaged sections of society and to "make them partners in the system". He asserted that his Government had "removed the difficulties that had cropped up in the proper implementation of the policy on reservation".

On matters political, he was less than expansive. He patric his Government on the back for not discriminating against the State Governments run by the Opposition parties. He tentatively noted the progress on the question of reservation for women in Parliament and the State Legislatures, and commended the one-third "double-member seats" proposal as worthy of a consensus.

'You can book your PM'

The only other political reform the Prime Minister talked about was the "need for greater commitment and accountability in our system of governance". In this context, he said his Government had decided to "enact the Lok Pal Bill", which he thought was an evidence of his Government's desire to "fight corruption at all levels". "In

spite of opposition from some people, I have personally brought the Prime Minister within the ambit of its investigation, so that you can even book



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, arriving at the Red Fort in New Delhi on Friday to deliver his Independence Day address. (AFP)
At right is the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, leaving the venue after the Prime Minister's speech. (Photo: V. Sudershan)

your Prime Minister if he commits any wrong".

More than half the Prime Minister's speech was devoted to enumerating the gains on the

economic front during the last five years. Mr. Vajpayee was most forthright in asserting that "in just one generation, India can be liberated from the curse

"together, we have to march" he wrote 40 years ago. It was a statesman-like address without being combatively partisan. Mr. Vajpayee's body-language was

confident, his prose muscular and his performance robust.
EdKorjai: Page 10
More reports on Pages 11, 12, 13

16 AUG 2003

110-1 'DID NOT SAY TEMPLE WILL BE BUILT FORCIBLY'

I will quit the day I feel I'm under pressure: PM

By Javed M. Ansari

NEW DELHI, AUG. 4. Clarifying his statement made in Ayodhya on construction of a Ram temple there, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today told the Lok Sabha that his Government believed that a solution to the Ayodhya dispute could come either through a court judgment or negotiations between the parties to the dispute.

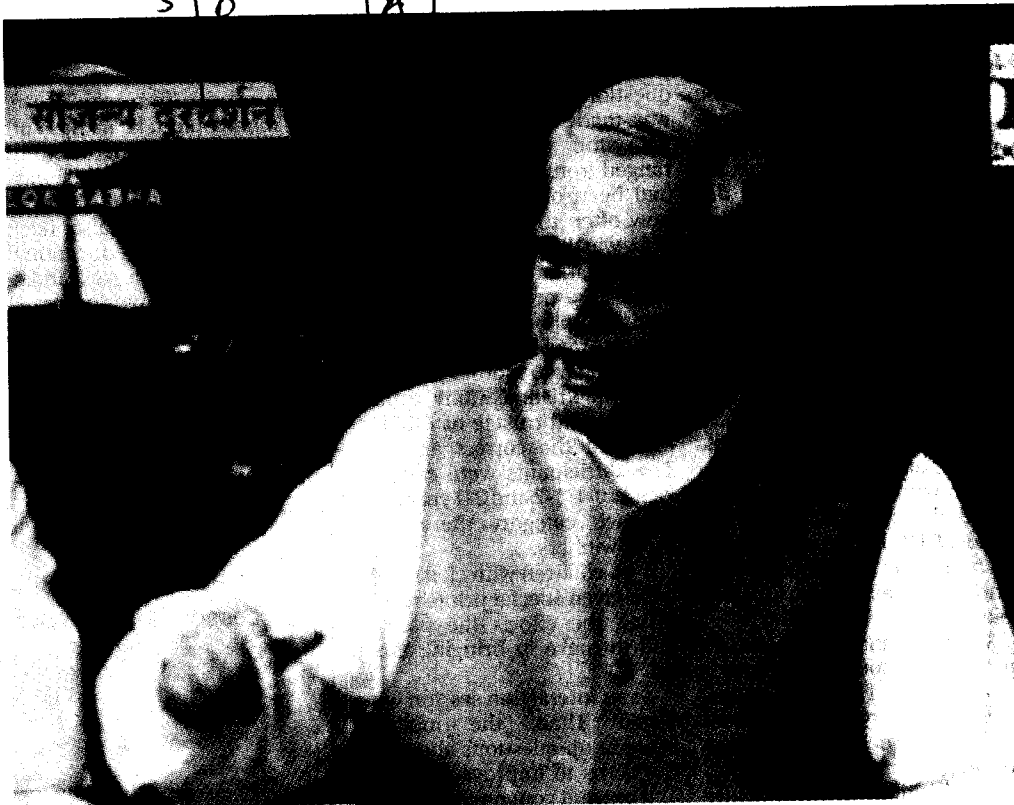
The Prime Minister's clarification came in response to demands from the Opposition parties. Mr. Vajpayee was at pains to dispel doubts over his speech last Saturday at the funeral of Ramchandradas Paramhans. "I did say that the Ram mandir must be built, but I did not say how it will be built or that it will be built forcibly," he said.

Mr. Vajpayee was present in the Lok Sabha during question hour and used the occasion to rebut the Opposition charge that he had "deviated" from his position on the contentious issue.

Mr. Vajpayee said the Opposition had failed to read the full text of his speech. "I have never said how the temple will be built or who will build it," he said. There were different views on the construction of the temple, but the decision to construct the temple would be a collective one.

Alluding to the objections raised by the Opposition parties to his statement that the late sant's dream would be fulfilled, Mr. Vajpayee said there was nothing wrong in what he had said. "Did I say where it would be built? What's wrong in saying that Paramhansji's last wish will be fulfilled," he asked.

Defending his speech at the funeral, the Prime Minister said he was also entitled to his rights as an individual and as a citizen of the country. "Prime Ministers



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, responds combatively in the Lok Sabha to allegations that he has constantly changed his stand on the Ayodhya issue. (A television image — PTI)

are also human, they are also citizens of this country, and are entitled to their sentiments, but I know how to keep my emotions in check," Mr. Vajpayee said. He gently chided the Opposition for not complimenting him for the restraint he had shown while speaking at the funeral in Ayodhya.

During the discussion, the Samajwadi Party leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav, alleged that Mr. Vajpayee was under "compulsion" which forced him to "change" his stand on the issue. "You are under compulsion. You are helpless but don't make the country helpless. This will ruin the country and divide society. You must express regret,"

he told the Prime Minister.

Stung to the quick, Mr. Vajpayee said: "There is no compulsion. The day I feel I am under compulsion, I will quit 'rajpaat' (power) and go."

Mr. Vajpayee's attempt to set at rest the controversy appeared to have made little impact on the Opposition. In the Lok Sabha, the entire Opposition staged a walkout after the Prime Minister completed his statement, to register its protest. The Opposition had given a series of adjournment notices on the issue, which were disallowed by the Speaker after Mr. Vajpayee's statement. The issue was raised as soon as the House met. Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi (Congress)

said the Prime Minister's statement had disrupted the negotiation process and could also impact the judicial process.

Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M) described the speech as "dangerous and disturbing". The whole idea behind the speech of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister was to "arouse passions on the eve of the elections," he said.

Mr. Mulayam Yadav demanded an explanation from the Prime Minister on who was forcing him to make such a statement. Ramvilas Paswan (Bihar Janshakti Party) accused the BJP of keeping the Ayodhya issue alive.

5 AUG 2003

'SOLUTION THROUGH TALKS OR COURTS'

No change in stand on Ayodhya: PM

10-1
9/8

By Neena Vyas

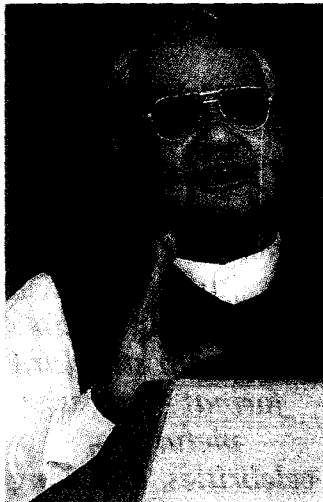
3

NEW DELHI, AUG. 3. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, categorically said here today that there was no change in the Government's Ayodhya policy — the matter should be settled either through negotiations or left to the courts. He virtually ruled out the legislative option that the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh have been insisting upon.

Efforts were on to get Hindu and Muslim leaders to sit together and find a way out of the impasse and he was confident they would succeed, he added.

The Prime Minister was clarifying his August 1 statement in Ayodhya on the issue at the cremation of Ramchandradas Paramhans, president of the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas. He was reported as having said that a Ram temple would come up at Ayodhya, that all hurdles in the way would be removed, and that the "dream" of the Paramhans would be fulfilled.

Today, Mr. Vajpayee virtually disowned that statement, saying the reports were "baseless" and he wished to "clarify". There was no change in the



Ayodhya policy, nor was there need for any change. Noting the criticism of his August 1 speech as reported, Mr. Vajpayee said: "In one speech I was not able to say everything that needed to be said (about the Ayodhya matter)."

The Opposition party leaders have charged the Prime Minister with making a habit of saying one thing on Ayodhya one day and then clarifying it afterwards. In fact, since August 1 several Opposition leaders have charged the Prime Minister with

"violating his oath of office" by speaking on a sensitive *sub judice* matter. Others expected him to "clarify" within days. The Congress, the CPI (M), the Janata Dal (S), the Samajwadi Party and several others had criticised Mr. Vajpayee for saying that the temple would come up at Ayodhya when the matter was before the courts.

Mr. Vajpayee was addressing a group of Delhi State Bharatiya Janata Party leaders and workers at his residence today. After talking about the city's development problems, he turned to Ayodhya. "There is no change in our Ayodhya policy. We have been saying we want a temple to come up at Ayodhya, but in a cordial atmosphere, with everyone's consent and help. One way was for both communities to decide together, efforts were being made and I am confident these will be successful." He said the "second way" was to leave the dispute to the courts. "Whatever the courts decide, everyone should accept it, this is also a way (to resolve the Ayodhya dispute)." And finally, he added: "There is no other way," thus ruling out the legislative option.

Remarks flayed: Page 11

4 AUG 2003

THE HINDU

MANDIR A NATIONAL WISH: ADVANI

Vajpayee raises Temple tempo

2 PM (2) 5:11 2/8



Sonia, Hindutva poll issues: BJP

NEW DELHI, Aug. 1. — Mr LK Advani today said the BJP would raise the issue of Mrs Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin in the Lok Sabha elections and accused the Opposition of making Hindutva a poll issue. "It (Mrs Gandhi's foreign origin) will obviously be raised by the BJP," the Deputy Prime Minister told a TV channel. — PTI

Statesman News Service

AYODHYA, Aug. 1. — The Prime Minister, visiting Ayodhya for the first time in 20 years, seems to have upped the ante a bit on the Temple issue.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee tried to strike a chord among Hindus but was careful not to commit himself to promising a Ram Temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya. He merely iterated his belief that this will happen.

"Standing in front of the funeral pyre of Paramhansji I say today that I believe (*vishwas hai*) that the Ram Temple will be built."

He was speaking at the funeral of Mahant Ramchandradas Paramahans on the banks of the Saryu. "Paramhansji's wish will be fulfilled... Obstacles will be removed... Better sense (*subuddhi*) will prevail on even those who oppose the construction (at the disputed site) and they too will join us," Mr Vajpayee said. The mahant, he said, struggled till his last breath for the construction of the

temple, but at the same time was aware of the difficulties.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr LK Advani described construction of the temple as "*rashtra ki iccha* (wish of the nation)". He said: "None could prevent the mahant's dream from being fulfilled." He spoke of the possibilities that could pave the way for the temple construction: a favourable court verdict or a settlement arrived at through talks between the contesting parties or legislation. Mr Advani ended his speech asking the audience to shout with him: "*Jai Shri Ram*" and "*Bharat mata ki jai*".

(In an interview to a TV channel, Mr Advani sounded confident that the temple would be built at the "*Ramjanmasthan*", PTI adds. "I've no doubt that the temple will be built at Lord Ram's birthplace.")

Mahant Nritya Gopal Das has been appointed the new chief of Ramjanmabhoomi Trust, which was headed by the the Paramhans.

2 AUG 2003

Centre opposes summoning of PM

By Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 10. The Centre today opposed an application seeking the summoning of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, for examining him as a witness before the Liberhan Commission probing the sequence of events leading to the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya.

The Centre's counsel, Lala Ram Gupta, told the Commission that the "Centre does not wish or require to examine any witness or recall any witnesses"

for examination.

Recently, the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Kalyan Singh, alleged that Mr. Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the Human Resource Minister, Murli Manohar Joshi, and the BJP spokesperson, Pramod Mahajan, were involved in a conspiracy to demolish the disputed structure.

In response to this, Mohamad Aslam Bhure, on whose petitions the Supreme Court had stopped all activities in the 'disputed' and 'undisputed' land in Ayodhya, filed an appli-

cation before the Commission seeking to summon Mr. Vajpayee, as his examination was crucial for the Commission to reach a fair conclusion.

Opposing the application, Mr. Gupta argued that since the recording of evidence had been closed and the Government had concluded its final argument, it did not wish to examine any new witness. He urged the Commission not to accept the application.

However, he said, if it was accepted, he would put forth arguments to refute the demand for

summoning the Prime Minister.

On Mr. Bhure's demand to recall Mr. Advani and Dr. Joshi, their counsel, Satya Pal Jain, submitted that the two leaders had already completed their deposition and there was no need to recall them.

He sought time to file a detailed reply.

Appearing for Mr. Kalyan Singh, counsel B.B. Saxena said he would oppose the applications filed by Mr. Bhure and the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board seeking to summon Mr. Singh.

RE FIND

1 1 JUL 2003

PM still gives Ayodhya talks a chance

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 9 JULY

DESPITE the VHP sabotaging efforts to resolve the temple logjam, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Wednesday dropped enough hints that he would press ahead with negotiations rather than take a detour by opting for legislation, as advocated by hard-core saffronites. The Prime Minister, who is clearly upset with the manner in which his efforts are being stymied by rabble-rousers within the Sangh Parivar, rebuffed VHP's call to the BJP to chose between "secularism" and "Hindutva", stressing India's secular and tolerant ethos.

The strong response to VHP's campaign came at the inaugural session of HRD ministry-sponsored 'Dialogue among Civilisation'.

This was the first time Mr Vajpayee publicly took issue with the VHP, which has been running a campaign against him. Though the speech before an audience comprising international delegates was only along expected lines, it acquired additional significance in the light of VHP's relentless assault on Mr Vajpayee.

This was Mr Vajpayee's first public appearance since VHP torpedoed Kanchi Shankaracharya's efforts to resolve the Ayodhya dispute. He made full use of the occasion to indicate that he was not ready to oblige the VHP and let it have its way at Ayodhya. "I suggest that this principle of secularism, which is enshrined in India's Constitution, should be accepted by all countries. Tolerance should become a global ideal. This will go a long

way in promoting understanding, co-operation and peace among peoples belonging to different faiths and cultures," he said.

Mr Vajpayee repeatedly emphasised the role of dialogue in resolving disputes. What he left unsaid, but which was clear to political observers, given the Prime Minister's uneasiness with the belligerence and confrontationalist stance being advocated by the VHP, could never pay dividend. Observing that "the culture of dialogue should begin at the national level", Mr Vajpayee felt that "the more a nation can harmonise differences at home, the greater will be its ability to contribute to a dialogue at the international level."

He also sought to puncture the much-talked about theory regarding the clash of civilisations, a theme that has won many converts within the Sangh Parivar and outside. Mr Vajpayee described the theory as being inherently "flawed and baseless." He added, "Its main fault is it fails to recognise that civilisations do not — rather cannot — clash."

"To be civilised is to abjure clashes and conflicts and to try to resolve all disputes and contentious issues through dialogue. Civilisations are anchored in a common set of values and ideals ... and all civilisations have a civilising influence on human beings. That is a part of the very definition of civilisation," Mr Vajpayee remarked.

He asserted that the future of mankind would not be determined by a conflict among civilisations. "Rather, humanity's future will witness a concert or confluence of civilisations," the Prime Minister said.

Seer's failure disappoints RSS

Chennai

9 JULY

RSS on Wednesday expressed its disappointment over the failure of the Kanchi Sankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati's initiative to resolve the Ayodhya tangle. RSS spokesman Ram Madhav told reporters here that it was unfortunate that the proposals had failed. He said RSS was not aware of the details of the proposals as it was not conveyed to them by the Sankaracharya. He said he had called on the Sankaracharya on Tuesday.

On the two-day meeting between the RSS and BJP leaders, which began here on Wednesday, he said there was no political significance to the meeting. "We are discussing organisational things". BJP president M Venkaiah Naidu accompanied by party general secretaries Promod Mahajan and Sanjai Joshi met the RSS top brass. RSS leaders Madandas Devi and Mohan Baghat participated in the meeting held at the Tamil Nadu RSS headquarters.

BJP sources said the meeting would continue on Thursday also but declined to divulge the nature of the talks. RSS leaders were believed to have conveyed to the BJP leaders the outcome of the deliberations of its two-day national executive, held in Kanyakumari on July 5 and 6. —PTI

The Economic Times

10 JUL 2003

Walking The Talk: Vajpayee Waxes Eloquent On Virtues Of Secularism

Dialogue holds the key, says PM

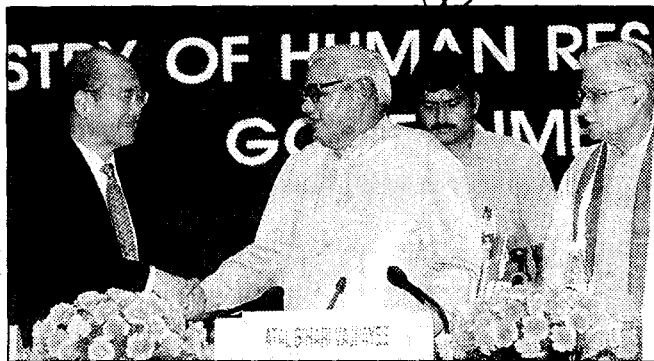
Our Delhi Bureau

9 JULY

RESOLVE contentious issues through dialogue was Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's advice at the inaugural session of Dialogue Among Civilisations. The international conference has been organised by the ministry of human resources development and Unesco.

The Prime Minister asked world governments to adopt the "culture of dialogue" at home to resolve contentious issues amicably through talks. He took the opportunity to add to the debate on Samuel Huntington's book Clash of Civilisation.

"The thesis was of course flawed and baseless. Its main fault was that it failed to recognise that civilisations do not — rather cannot — clash... To be civilised is to abjure clashes and conflicts and to try to resolve all disputes and contentious issues through dialogue. Civilisations are anchored in a common set



HARMONY TIME: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee shakes hands with Unesco director-general Koichuro Matsuura in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

of values and ideals ... and all civilisations have a civilising influence on human beings. That is a part of the very definition of civilisation," he said.

Interestingly, the conference is being attended by representatives of nearly 60 countries, of these many are headed by military juntas

and authoritarian regimes. Dialogue has not been part of their political makeup. Among the countries represented at the conference are Myanmar, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, China, Burundi, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Iran. The Prime Minister took the opportunity to highlight the need to

emulate India's acceptance of the principle of secularism to establish a violence-free environment and ensure sustainable development.

"I suggest that this principle of secularism, which is enshrined in India's Constitution, should be accepted by all countries. Tolerance should become a global ideal. This would go a long way in promoting understanding, cooperation and peace among peoples belonging to different faiths and cultures."

Mr Vajpayee said: "The more a nation can harmonise differences at home, the greater will be its ability to contribute to a dialogue at the international level." Dialogue, the Prime Minister stressed, is the key. "The deeper and broader the dialogue, the greater is the understanding among civilisations and nations. The greater the understanding, the stronger is the cooperation and goodwill among nations. And the stronger the cooperation the lesser is the need to spend huge resources on arms and military strategies."

We will triumph, says Kalam

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JUNE 28. Tomorrow's world will be a difficult one but India, which will be the focal point, will win, the President, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, has said.

Speaking to an enthusiastic crowd of soldiers in the forward area of Uri near the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir today, Dr. Kalam congratulated the Army for the good job done by them in the State. "I congratulate you for your good job near the LoC, especially (what for you have done) for the public... you are the defenders of the Valley." Dr. Kalam was accompanied by the Commander of 15 Corps, Lt. Gen. V. G. Patankar.

The closest Pakistani picket was 7 km from where Dr. Kalam addressed the troops. Speaking in English, he said "tomorrow's world will be a difficult one but India will be a focal point and we will win".

The world was faced with challenges in the

form of religious, ideological and economic conflicts. "We have to handle these conflicts."

Prays at Hazratbal

The President began his hectic schedule here with a visit to the Hazratbal shrine, where he prayed for peace and had a glimpse of the holy relic of the Prophet. "Islam is the religion of peace. Prophet Mohammad also preached peace.

Let peace come to all of us." Quoting from the holy Koran, he stressed on the secular aspects of Islam. "What you do, you are responsible for it. What I do, I am responsible for it". He hoped that peace would soon return to the State.

The Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, had readily accepted his suggestion of converting the shrine into a full-fledged heritage centre.

Dr. Kalam arrived at the shrine situated on the western shore of the famous Dal Lake in a motorboat amid tight security.

29 JUN 2003

'DELHI STUCK TO ITS TIBET STAND'

India-China border talks soon, says PM

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI/SHANGHAI, June 27. — The Prime Minister, returning here this evening from a "good" visit to China, said talks between special representatives of Delhi and Beijing on finding a solution to the border dispute will "start immediately".

Before leaving Shanghai for Delhi, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee hinted at the possibility of China recognising Sikkim as part of India. The "process", he said, by which the north-eastern state "will cease to be an issue" has started. On Tibet, he was categorical that Delhi had stuck to its "consistent stand".

On his arrival in Delhi, the Prime Minister was asked whether any deadline had been fixed for the representatives to resolve the border dispute. Mr Vajpayee said: "Talks will start immediately and the effort would be to resolve it as early as possible." While national security adviser Mr

Brajesh Mishra is India's representative, China has deputed Mr Dai Bingguo.

"So far officials have been dealing with it (border question) and got stuck when they reached some hurdle. This won't happen anymore. Now the special representatives will make efforts to find a solution" to the vexed issue, Mr Vajpayee said.

Brushing aside reports of confusion over China's stand on Sikkim, he said that with the passage of time Beijing would accept the state as part of India. "There should be no doubt on Sikkim's future. As per the decisions taken and with the passage of time, Sikkim will be recognised (by China) as part of India," Mr Vajpayee said.

The Prime Minister shared the Chinese view in the joint document that it will be a "step-by-step approach".

Describing his six-day visit as "good", he said new avenues of cooperation had been identified and the two sides would work together on various issues.

On the Indo-Pak peace initiatives, he said that while General Pervez Musharraf had said nothing was happening on the Line of Control, the Pakistani leader had also said he could not give a guarantee that not a single bird would fly across the border.

He, however, refused to go into specifics because he was yet to study the Pakistani President's remarks in the USA and also because of the latter's subsequent claim that he had been wrongly quoted.

In Shanghai, Mr Vajpayee said that at the meetings with Chinese leaders, the Indian side had got the "distinct message" that Beijing fully reciprocated Delhi's desire for mutual goodwill and for a comprehensive expansion of cooperation in all areas.

He referred to "much discussion and debate" on India's position on Tibet and said that what he had agreed with the Chinese leaders was consistent "in a better way" with India's known position on the issue.

The emphasis was on autonomy which India had acknowledged in the joint declaration. But Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the Chinese territory, he said.

Disagreeing with the suggestion that India had got nothing from the Chinese leadership on the question of Sikkim, which Beijing has refused to recognise as Indian territory for the last 28 years, Mr Vajpayee said that with the signing of the protocol for trade through this state, "we have also started the process by which Sikkim will cease to be an issue in India-Chinese relations".

Photograph on page 4

There should be no doubt on Sikkim's future... With time, Sikkim will be recognised (by China) as part of India'

Trade & trust on Atal agenda

Vajpayee reaches Beijing, meets China Premier today

Vir Sanghvi
Beijing, June 22

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee arrived on Sunday in Beijing at the start of a six-day visit, the first by an Indian Prime Minister in a decade. In a statement issued in Delhi before he boarded the flight to Beijing, Vajpayee said, "We attach high priority to our relations with this important neighbour," and added, "I believe that my discussions with the new Chinese leaders would help in building better understanding and trust."

Vajpayee is due to have talks with Prime Minister Wen Jiabao on Monday morning followed by full delegation-level talks. On Monday evening, the Chinese Prime Minister will host a banquet for Vajpayee.

Though Vajpayee has a packed schedule in China — he visits the historically important city of Luoyang on Wednesday before moving on to Shanghai — Indian officials accompanying the Prime Minister are wary of over-hyping the visit.

"We see the visit as a part of an ongoing process, not as an event in itself," a senior member of Vajpayee's delegation said. The agenda for this trip is largely economic — there are substantial contingents from trade and industry chambers in attendance — and nobody expects any



BEIJING BOND: Vajpayee is greeted by a young girl after his arrival in Beijing on Sunday.

breakthroughs either on the border dispute or on the complex issue of China's close political links with Pakistan.

The Indian delegation

is treating the trip as a chance to get to know the new Chinese leadership and is optimistic, after the success of Defence Minister George Fernan-

des's recent visit, of building equations with China's current leaders.

"We were due to visit China last year but delayed the trip because we

wanted to come after the new leadership had taken over," a key Vajpayee aide said.

Related report on Page 5

RETORT TO MUSHARRAF'S KARGIL REFERENCE

Pak. preparing for fourth defeat, says Vajpayee

9-PM
10-1
1876

By Lalit Shastri

MANDLA (MADHYA PRADESH), JUNE 17. Taking note of the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's recent invocation of "Kargil", the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today said that Islamabad was "preparing for a fourth defeat in its proxy war against India".

"Musharraf has reminded us of Kargil but he should remember Pakistan was defeated thrice in wars and was now preparing for a fourth defeat," Mr. Vajpayee said at a BJP rally in this predominantly-tribal district headquarters, near Jabalpur.

Defending his peace initiative, Mr. Vajpayee said that he had once again extended the hand of friendship to Pakistan. He would continue to do so till "good sense prevailed on our neighbour". Pakistan was given a befitting reply during the Kargil war when each and every infiltrator was pushed out. "We talk of peace with Pakistan on the basis of our strength," the Prime Minister said adding that both countries needed to bring down their expenditure on arms and devote their resources for development.

The rally got an unprecedented response despite a hailstorm and thundershowers that lashed the region in the afternoon. An hour before the rally was to begin at 4 p.m. there was chaos on the highways linking this town; the strong winds had uprooted many trees and the electricity wires had snapped.

Uma Bharti would be the BJP's chief ministerial candidate in the coming Assembly election in Madhya Pradesh, Mr. Vajpayee announced amid thunderous applause. He also compared Ms. Bharti to the legendary medieval ruler of the territory, Rani Durgawati. Politics was not a "power game", he said emphasising that the BJP-led Government at the Centre treated all States on a par and did not discriminate one State from another irrespective of the party in power. He did not directly refer to the chargesheet issued against his Government by the Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee president last week but said his Government treated all States equally. He cited the example of Rajasthan saying the



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the BJP leader, Uma Bharti, waving to the crowd at a party rally at Mandla on Tuesday.

— Photo: A.M. Faruqui

Congress-ruled State had been facing the worst drought and that the Centre had immediately sanctioned relief without discrimination.

The country was going through change and there was no need for pessimism or frustration. "We try to go hand in hand with the State Governments and also try to point out their mistakes," Mr. Vajpayee said.

Taking a dig at the Madhya Pradesh Government, the Prime Minister said it had been "misrepresenting facts" on the issue of forest villages. "We want to convert the forest villages into revenue villages and the Centre has even issued no-objection certificates in this regard. However, the State

Government, which is supposed to regularise the forest villages, has failed to issue the notification as has already been done by Kerala." Nothing could be achieved by writing "love letters". The examination results in the State had been very poor, he said. Also, the students had a genuine complaint that they could not study due to continuous power cut.

There was a need to maintain the basic ethics in Centre-State relations. The States should use Central funds properly but it appeared that this was not happening. "Some leaders" went abroad and spoiled the country's image on the issue of Dalits, he said.

18 JUN 2003

Pak a hotbed of terrorism, Advani tells US

Dharam Shourie

CHICAGO 13 JUNE

IN a tough reminder to the United States of changing realities, deputy prime minister L.K. Advani said Pakistan is now the "hotbed" of al-Qaeda. He said Pakistan was trying to secure Kashmir through terrorism after failing to get it in three wars.

In hard-hitting speeches here on Thursday at two separate functions, Mr Advani said, "Pakistan has all along been and continues to be a source of terrorism, primarily against India, but whose reverberations are also felt elsewhere."

He stressed both India and the United States are threatened by



ADVANI: PAK THEM OFF

the same source of terrorism.

Mr Advani advised Pakistani leaders against holding peace hostage and told them to resolve all issues through negotiations.

"Give and take should be part of negotiations," he said, urging Pakistan to "sincerely" implement its own promises of halting cross-border terrorism against India and dismantling the terrorist infrastructure.

Despite being a target of relentless terrorism, India has extended its hand of friendship to Pakistan, which has been appreciated by the world, Mr Advani told the Chicago Council of Foreign Relations and, later, a large dinner meeting of the Indian community here.

Mr Advani said President George W. Bush, during discussions with him, had appreciated Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's initiative and had promised to take up the issue of cross border terrorism with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf who is scheduled to visit Washington later this month. He said Pakistani leaders were using terrorism as a way of "bleeding India and eventually achieving their aim" of securing Kashmir.

"Which is why, terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir was advertised as a freedom struggle. The futility of this dangerous course is now more clearly known than ever before." —PTI

4 JUN 2003

New 'economic boss' for the PMO

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 11. The Union Finance Secretary, S. Narayan, has been appointed Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office. Mr. Narayan, scheduled to retire on June 30, is now likely to have an extended spell of service as Officer on Special Duty in the PMO.

Mr. Narayan's designation and role in the Finance Ministry will go to Dinesh Gupta, the incumbent Expenditure Secretary.

With Mr. Narayan's appointment in the PMO, the current "economic man", Pradipto Ghosh, will move out as Additional Secretary in the Department of Economic Affairs of the Finance Ministry. However, Mr. Ghosh is one of the 31 officers of the 1969 batch "empanelled" last week for appointment at the Secretary-level.

Mr. Narayan's appointment is seen as one more attempt by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to gain a semblance of direction over the Government's economic policy.

The last Secretary-level "economic boss", N.K. Singh, had to move out of the PMO two years ago when Mr. Vajpayee came under attack from within the Sangh Parivar as well as a section of the BJP. Though the Prime Minister's detractors were primarily gunning for his Principal Secretary, Brajesh Mishra, Mr. Vajpayee staved off the challenge by sacrificing Mr. N.K. Singh. Subsequently, Mr. Singh was appointed a Member of the Planning Commission. In the bargain, the PMO is seen to have lost control over the economic policy.

The confusion and controversies over the disinvestment policy and time-table brought home the need for an activist role for the PMO in implementation of the settled policies.

Call to free process from politics

Atal opens talks door on temple

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 8: With a little over a year left for the Lok Sabha election, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee turned the spotlight back on Ayodhya, saying his government wanted an early settlement of the dispute either through a court verdict or negotiations or both.

Speaking at the golden jubilee celebrations of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam at the Siri Fort Auditorium today, Vajpayee said: "We want to see an early solution to the Ayodhya issue. How long will this issue linger?"

He said the involvement of political parties and leaders made a negotiated settlement difficult. Therefore, it was imperative that they rise above "party politics" and stop scoring brownie points against one another.

"Rajneeti se mukt honi chahiye. Na laabh na haani dekhni chahiye (It should be above politics. Nobody should think of the gains and losses)," he said.

Vajpayee proposed that the issue should ideally be resolved between religious and social representatives from both sides.

Pointing towards Kanchi Sankaracharya Swami Jayendra Saraswati, who shared the dais with the Prime Minister and Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Vajpayee said he was still me-



Sonia listens to Vajpayee's speech. (AFP)

diating. "Initially there have been some difficulties, but efforts are on," Vajpayee said.

The Sankaracharya earlier told reporters that a draft appeal was being jointly worked out between Hindu and Muslim representatives and it would be unveiled during his next visit to Delhi in July.

Saraswati claimed that the Muslim leaders he had talked to were keen on a solution and even went to the extent of saying that they were ready to hand over the contentious land in Ayodhya to Hindu religious heads but not political organisations.

He added that Muslim leaders were prepared for an agreement involving representatives of organisations

like the Kanchi Mutt. The seer said their only concern was getting something in return for giving up their claim on the Ayodhya land.

His suggestion was that the "hundreds of mosques" taken over by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) should be restored to them so that they could offer *namaz* there. "The demand is reasonable," he said.

However, members of the two main parties involved in the dispute — the All India Muslim Personal Law Board and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) — denied knowledge of any such appeal. Neither did the Sankaracharya contact them recently, they said, adding that the last time they met him formally was in 2002 when the VHP wanted to perform *shila daan* at the site and he worked hard to broker a truce.

S.Q.R. Iliyasi, convener of the board's Babri committee, said on phone from Hyderabad: "I can state with authority that no Muslim organisation or individual of any standing met the Sankaracharya recently. Nor is there any such proposal. If, by leaders, he means persons like Shahnawaz Hussain or Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi (of the BJP), the community knows neither has a base or locus standi."

VHP sources said they had "no idea" what the Sankaracharya was doing. "At least we have not been approached by him," said the sources.

LEAVES ON 10-DAY TOUR TO U.S., U.K. ✓

Tough stand on terrorism will continue: Advani

119-1 8/6
MUMBAI, JUNE 7. The Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, said today that "India will continue to deal sternly with terrorism, as it had done on several occasions."

He told reporters here before embarking on his 10-day tour to the U.S. and the U.K. that it would work towards promoting world peace.

"We will continue to take up the fight against terrorism on our own," Mr. Advani said. However, the fight against terrorism had to be "worldwide" and he would talk to leaders in the U.S. and the U.K. about countries that aided terrorist activity.

Mr. Advani said relations between India and the U.S. had "changed fundamentally" since the end of the Cold War. "Both the countries had borne the brunt of terrorist attacks and the cordial relations between the two countries could be used for promoting world peace," he said. — UNI

Sridhar Krishnaswami reports from Washington:

Mr. Advani arrives here tomorrow for two days of high-level, intensive discussions

with Bush administration officials. He is expected to meet the Secretary of the newly-created Homeland Security Department, Tom Ridge, the Attorney-General, John Ashcroft, the President's National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, and the Vice-President, Dick Cheney.

Mr. Advani is expected to meet the President, George W. Bush, but it is not clear if this will take place during the meeting with Dr. Rice or Mr. Cheney or if Mr. Advani will be taken to the Oval Office.

Mr. Advani is also expected to have a session with the Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, another major player in the Bush administration. Mr. Advani's meeting on Capitol Hill with the top lawmakers is being finalised. He is also travelling to Chicago and Los Angeles. The visit is expected to be "very substantive" and not "pro-forma". In fact, Mr. Advani has the reputation of being a straight-talker, one who does not mince his words. The White House is in tune with this image and the administration as a whole has been quite receptive to the visit.

The Bush administration has been encouraging India and Pakistan to take steps to push the peace process along. At the same time, it is aware of the things that could go wrong and hence has been keeping its fingers crossed. The hope is that hardliners in both India and Pakistan do not end up derailling the delicate process that has started showing signs of a forward movement.

Terrorism is expected to be the major agenda of the discussion. New Delhi, over time, has expressed unease with the Bush administration signing on to Pakistan as its ally in the war against terrorism. But in the immediate context and scheme of things, Washington cannot be expected to abandon Islamabad even as there is hope that this new-found relationship will have some beneficial fall-out as it pertains to terrorism in the subcontinent. After Mr. Advani's high profile visit to Washington, the Bush administration will get ready to receive the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, who is being given a higher profile.

THE HINDU

8 JUN 2003

PM for benchmarks to evaluate Doha Round 'outcomes'

By Amit Baruah

EVIAN (FRANCE), JUNE 1. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today said it was "going to become impossible" in most developing countries to "secure political support" for any further trade liberalisation measures if "often stated goals" in the fields of trade, environment and resource conservation for development were not implemented.

Intervening in Hindi at the first-ever "extended dialogue" of the G-8 plus 12 developing countries here, he said: "It is quite clear that developing countries are deeply disappointed by the progress so far on the Millennium Development Round since the Doha meeting nearly two years ago."

Mr. Vajpayee minced no words when he said that the non-ratification of the Kyoto protocol on climate change had unfortunately stalled the "Clean Development Mechanism" for investment and technology flows to developing countries in exchange for carbon credits.

"This has seriously impeded many developing countries' programmes for renewable energy and energy conservation to reduce the greenhouse gas intensities of their economies. We have to find ways of implementing the Clean Development Mechanism even if the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol is delayed," he said as anti-U.S. and anti-globalisation activists kept security personnel busy.

The Prime Minister, who joined leaders of China, Nigeria, Malaysia and Brazil (among other developing nations), said there was a need to arrive at some benchmarks for monitoring and evaluating the "outcomes" of the Doha Round.

Some benchmarks, he suggested, could be: the rapid



The French President, Jacques Chirac, (left) talks to the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, on the terrace of the Hotel Royal in the French lakeside resort town of Evian, venue of the G-8 Summit, on Sunday. — AFP

elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers to developing country exports, the phase-out of trade-distorting agricultural subsidies and removal of barriers to agricultural exports while ensuring the livelihood of billions of farmers in developing countries.

The removal of visa and non-visa obstruction to the free movement of natural persons for providing services as well as broader access of developing

countries to pharmaceuticals (in the context of restrictive patent regimes) were some of the other points made by Mr. Vajpayee in this context.

Saying that he was happy that special attention was being focussed at these meetings to help African countries, the Prime Minister proposed that these facilities be extended to other, similarly-placed developing countries.

"Poverty, disease, malnutri-

tion and hunger do not distinguish between continent, country, colour or creed. Their counteraction also should not make such distinctions."

Mr. Vajpayee appeared a bit soft on the issue of calling upon the developing world to fulfil international responsibilities to help provide funds where needed.

"The need for external augmentation" was required since developing countries could not fund economic growth merely through their savings.

"We also have to address the problem of unrestrained resource flows, which can — as the East Asia crisis showed — shatter the economy of developing countries," he said reiterating a proposal that he made at the February Non-Aligned Movement summit to "seriously consider" the idea of a small levy on international flows.

On environmental issues, the Prime Minister underlined that the Convention on Biological Diversity had failed to transfer technologies to developing countries in return for their biodiversity resources.

"I believe we need to seriously examine the concept of adequate user fees to developing countries for access to their biodiversity resources. Similarly, the traditional knowledge of communities should be acknowledged as valuable intellectual property. They could charge a fee from commercial users for the development and conservation of the development and conservation of such knowledge over millennia.

"Perhaps, we should develop a broader approach to the system of user fees on global environmental resources, which would contribute to their conservation, while simultaneously generating funds for development..."

Vajpayee moots levy for global fund

CHIRAC'S SPECIAL GESTURE IN PM'S WELCOME

Press Trust of India

EVIAN, June 1. — Favouring a small levy on international capital flows to create funds for global development, Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee called for rapid elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers to exports of developing countries. Mr Vajpayee, who was extended a special welcome gesture by French President Mr Jacques Chirac, also spoke about phasing out trade-distorting movement of personnel in the service sector.

In a special gesture, Mr Chirac, who specially invited Mr Vajpayee for the informal summit ahead of the two-day G-8 conference, received the Prime Minister near the car in which he arrived instead of receiving him at the designated place of welcome.

Mr Vajpayee flew to Geneva by an Air-India Special aircraft from St Petersburg, and hopped to Evian, on the Franco-Swiss border, by helicopter.

Addressing the informal meet of G-8 leaders called "Extended Dialogue" to discuss development, Mr Vajpayee said the international community needed to set some benchmarks for monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of the Doha round of the WTO in terms of concrete progress towards a global trading regime which would promote development.

Listing out the areas in which the

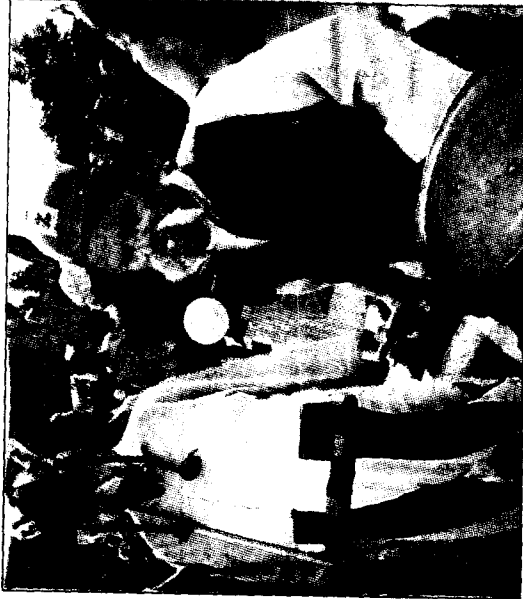
benchmarks were needed, were the rapid elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers to developing countries' exports and broader access of developing countries to pharmaceuticals.

his demand for quite some time now for a "global dialogue on development".

Mr Vajpayee felt the huge resources required for poverty alleviation and economic growth in developing countries could not be raised purely through the savings of developing countries. "We also have to address the problem of unrestrained resources flows which... shatter the economy of developing countries." He said the time has come for the world to consider the idea of a small levy on international capital flows to be credited to funds for global development.

He also said the convention on biological diversity had failed to transfer technologies to developing countries in return for their bio-diversity resources. "The traditional knowledge of communities should be acknowledged as valuable intellectual property."

Mr Vajpayee also met Mexican President Mr Vicente Fox before leaving St Petersburg.



Frenchmen dressed as comicbook heroes Asterix and Obelix demonstrate as the G-8 summit begins in Evian on Sunday. — AFP

The other two areas were the phasing out of trade-distorting agricultural subsidies and removal of barriers to agricultural exports while ensuring livelihood security for billions of farmers.

Thanking President Chirac for launching this "excellent" initiative for a forum for talks between the developed and developing world, he said this meeting was a major first step in the direction of

Chirac backs tax on arms trade: Mr Jacques Chirac said he was in favour of a tax on the global arms trade to help finance a fund to feed the hungry and remedy the structural cause of hunger.

Such a tax, pushed by Brazilian President Mr Luiz Inacio Lula, "would not be at all unjustified", he told reporters.

Another report, photograph on page 2

A tal at Bush table, Pak on menu

BHARAT BHUSHAN

St. Petersburg, June 1: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee finally got to chat with US President George W. Bush last night at a dinner where he was seated next to him.

This was no accident. In a demonstration of his friendship with India, Russian President Vladimir Putin created the opportunity by making sure that Vajpayee was at the high table at the banquet he hosted for the 40-odd world leaders at the Petrovoretz Palace on Saturday.

According to an official source, Bush made laudatory references to Vajpayee's latest peace initiative with Pakistan. The Indian Prime Minister is understood to have told him that the peace process with Pakistan was unlikely to succeed unless cross-border terrorism came to an end.

Bush apparently agreed with Vajpayee. The official source claimed Bush told the Indian Prime Minister that he would be talking on the subject to Pervez Musharraf when the Pakistan President visits America later this month.

The official said that the subject of Pakistan was not discussed for more than five to seven minutes and, after that, there was a lot of chit chat at the table. Besides Vajpayee and Bush, others at Putin's table included Russian First Lady Lyudmila Putina, Greek Prime Minister Constantinos Simitis and his wife and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and his wife. While Greece currently holds the presidency of the European Union, Italy is the incoming chair.

Reacting to a question about what would be the litmus test



Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee with President George W. Bush at the dinner table in Petrovoretz Palace on Saturday. (AP)

of Pakistan's intentions to pursue a peaceful settlement with India, the official said: "We would have to be convinced that Pakistan has taken a strategic decision to stop cross-border terrorism." India had not yet come to such a determination, he said.

New Delhi's assessment was that there was no clampdown on the militant organisations operating from Pakistan.

"If large-scale infiltration attempts continue to be made, that

would indicate that there is no clampdown. In the month of May, the infiltration attempts have been fairly sizeable. About 18 to 20 militants have been killed in such attempts," he said.

But the process of normalisation of ties was proceeding apace — technical talks for restoration of the Delhi-Lahore bus service were expected in the next couple of days, the official said. "The next step would be to restore civil aviation links."

The resizng of the missions

of the two countries to their pre-December 13, 2001 strength, however, was likely to take some time, the official suggested.

Although his meeting with Bush was only over dinner, Vajpayee has set a record of sorts by meeting all the P5 (the permanent five members of the UN Security Council) leaders within 24 hours in St. Petersburg. Except for Bush, with Presidents Putin, Jacques Chirac and Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Tony Blair, there was a de-

tailed exchange of views.

Besides the unanimous approval of Vajpayee's peace initiative, the two messages that India has received in these meetings are: one, that there is a sizeable opinion that the Iraq situation is bogged down and political processes need to be activated to get out of it; and two, that there is unlikely to be any military action against Iran because of deep division on the issue within the US as well as within its allies.



Cold & warm

A grim grip for an adversary and an extra yard for a new ally. French President Jacques Chirac and President George W. Bush, who did not see eye to eye during the Iraq conflict, shook hands (Reuters close-up shows Bush's hand on the left and Chirac's on the right) in their first meeting since the end of the war at the G8 summit.

Their handshake, however, was short and there was none of the hugging and embracing that marked several other arrivals. (See Page 4)

But Chirac, whose special invitation brought Vajpayee to the summit, went out of his way to receive the Prime Minister near his car, not at the predetermined place.

Overall, the Indian Prime Minister should have reason to be pleased with himself at a productive visit. Putin honoured Vajpayee in more ways than one: by inviting him to the trilateral celebrations of St. Petersburg, by holding a bilateral meeting with Vajpayee even if it was well past midnight (the only other such meeting was with Bush), and by making sure that the Indian Prime Minister gets to talk to the US President.

■ See Page 8

PM takes India out of South Asia confines

Atal in global player jersey

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Berlin, May 29: Singing paeans to the inclusive character of Indian democracy, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee urged Germany to "reform old mindsets" and not see India through a restrictive South Asian prism. He argued that "the remnants of Cold War ideologies" which promoted this view should be eliminated.

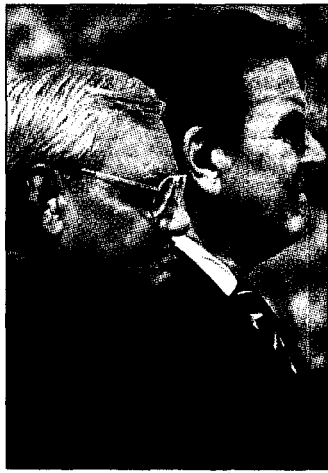
Germany, Vajpayee suggested, should act on its understanding of "India's global presence" and not see it in a restrictive regional perspective.

Addressing a meeting of MPs of the German lower house of parliament, the Bundestag, Vajpayee appeared hurt that people often did not recognise the enormity of India's achievements.

Vajpayee criticised the West for its two-faced attitude to terrorism. He said India had suffered both from terrorism as well as "from the consequences of the double standard applied by countries to deal with terrorism in different places".

He said correct lessons needed to be learnt from the events of 9/11 or else the fight against terrorism would not succeed.

There were two important lessons of September 11 and its aftermath, he felt. First, the reach of terrorism could be countered comprehensively only through global cooperation. Second, and perhaps the more



AB Vajpayee with Gerhard Schröder in Berlin. (Reuters)

important lesson in Vajpayee's eyes, "we cannot and should not, negotiate with terrorism or differentiate between its various constituent elements".

He argued that "our success against terrorism will depend on how well we have learnt this lesson".

Terrorism, Vajpayee claimed, targeted democratic societies because they "seek peace, protect freedoms, permit dissent and value consensus" and terrorism aims to destroy these attributes. He said that though India continued to suffer from cross-border terrorism, he was seeking peace with Pakistan to inspire action to end the menace and the infrastructure which supports it: He urged all friends of India to use

their influence on Pakistan to make this happen.

The Prime Minister claimed that India's achievements in building a vibrant democracy were often not appreciated. India, despite a high illiteracy rate, with no experience of universal adult franchise before Independence and, despite the doubts expressed about its democratic future at that time, had nurtured democracy well.

India, he said, had successfully preserved its multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious social fabric within a constitutional, democratic and federal framework. It had institutionalised fundamental freedoms, human rights and the rule of law. The change of governments in India happened through "a peaceful, non-violent expression of popular will".

However, packing a punch against those who did not give India credit for these achievements, Vajpayee said: "As I look around at the functioning of real and sham democracies around the world, I sometimes feel that the enormity of India's achievements in this direction is not fully appreciated."

Although he did not mention the name of any "sham democracies", one could be forgiven for wondering whether this was not a broadside against Pakistan and how being coupled with Pakistan hurts India's global ambitions.

■ See Page 8

THE TELEGRAPH

30 MAY 2003

I'll retire if talks with Pakistan fail: Atal

Agencies
Berlin, May 28

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee has said he will "retire" if his third peace initiative with Pakistan fails. Speaking to German daily *Der Spiegel* in Berlin on his two-day visit to Germany, he also said the resolution of the Kashmir problem would require "serious compromises".

Moved by Vajpayee's initiative to sort the Kashmir issue, Germany asked Pakistan to make an appropriate response to it. After more than an hour-long talks with Vajpayee, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder

13/5
lauded the PM's initiative and said he had "respect and admiration" for the new move.

The German leader, who is due to meet Pervez Musharraf here next month, told reporters that he would have no hesitation in telling the Pakistani President to respond appropriately to Vajpayee's peace efforts.

Earlier in his interview, when asked if he found Musharraf "trustworthy", Vajpayee said: "I am prepared to negotiate with him." He welcomed the restrictions recently imposed by Pakistan on Hizbul Mujahideen, but added that other steps would have to follow.

9 PM
HFI
"Right now Pakistan seems to have prohibited the most radical group, Mujahideen. If this is truly the case and has real consequences, I can only welcome this step. But other steps have to follow."

Told that the world had been surprised when he extended the "hand of friendship" to Pakistan last month, he said, "It should not have surprised anyone. I have said more than once that we make peace with Pakistan and strive for cooperation. But he insisted that the "necessary prerequisite" to continue the dialogue was for Pakistan to put an end to cross-border terrorism.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

29 MAY 2003

TELL MUSHARRAF TO END CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM'

Ready for dialogue on all issues with Pak.: PM

By Amit Baruah

BERLIN, MAY 28. Ruling out the possibility of a reference to the people in Jammu and Kashmir, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today said that the people of the State had already "decided" what they wanted through the October 2002 Assembly elections and that there was no need for any "new decision".

Addressing a joint press conference after talks with Gerhard Schroeder, German Chancellor, Mr. Vajpayee suggested that Mr. Schroeder tell the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf (who is expected here next month), to end cross-border terrorism. India, for its part, was prepared for a dialogue on all issues, including Jammu and Kashmir. Though there was no suggestion that Mr. Vajpayee was speaking in terms of a precondition for a dialogue his emphasis on the need to end cross-border terrorism was unmistakable.

Asked if India was ready to give the Kashmiris the right to vote under a U.N. resolution, Mr. Vajpayee told a German reporter that India was a democratic country where elections took place regularly. The people of Jammu and Kashmir were very much part of this process.

Pointing out that a large number of people came out to vote in the recent Kashmir elections, the Prime Minister indicated that this was "sufficient" to gauge the will of the people and no action under the U.N.'s aegis was possible.

Welcoming Mr. Vajpayee's "third initiative" to make peace with Pakistan, Mr. Schroeder, however, was reluctant to give a direct commitment on whether he would tell Gen. Musharraf to end terrorism when he visited Germany. "Never talk about a guest before you have spoken to him," the Chancellor said add-



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, with the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, at a welcome ceremony in Berlin on Wednesday. — AFP

ing that he was ready to emphasise that he admired Mr. Vajpayee's efforts to find a constructive solution to the problems of cross-border terrorism and Kashmir.

Mr. Schroeder stated that any civilian Government was called upon to support anti-terrorist measures and he expected an appropriate response in the same constructive spirit. All

concerned should support the peace-seeking bid launched by Mr. Vajpayee to resolve the Kashmir issue. Interestingly, the German leader, who has been among those keen on making up with the United States after his opposition to the unilateral war in Iraq, was clear that it would need a new United Nations resolution for his country to play an enhanced role in

Afghanistan.

In his opening remarks at the press conference, Mr. Vajpayee said that India and Germany shared a common perspective on terrorism. "We appreciate Germany's understanding of the problems faced by us from cross-border terrorism. Our two countries also share a vision of a cooperative multi-polar world.

"An integrated and expanded Europe would have an important place in this world order, and Germany would naturally play a key role in this process. India attaches great importance to its relations with the European Union..."

On multilateral issues, Mr. Schroeder said there was wide agreement between the two countries, including on a constructive role for the U.N. While agreeing on the need to fight international terrorism, he pointed to the need to support the West Asian peace process. Both countries had welcomed the latest developments in the peace process.

In the bilateral arena, Mr. Schroeder said there were no problems at all and today's talks focussed on the need to improve ties in the scientific and economic fields.

The two countries favoured close cooperation in the field of renewable energy, especially in solar and wind energy. The Prime Minister said that institutions of bilateral cooperation were functioning well, but the two countries needed to "sharpen the focus" on our economic relations.

"Germany is one of our largest trading partners. It is a substantial investor in India. Many German firms are household names in India. The new trend, which is very encouraging, is that Indian companies are now investing in Germany."

Nod for envoy
By Our Diplomatic
Correspondent

'Serious compromises needed'

BERLIN, MAY 28. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today declared his readiness to negotiate with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, in the interest of peace in the region.

Observing that the Kashmir resolution would require "serious compromises," Mr. Vajpayee said, "I am prepared to negotiate with him."

In an interview to *Der Spiegel*, a widely-circulated German daily, he welcomed the restriction imposed by Pakistan on the militant outfit, Hizbul-Mujahideen. However, "other steps will have

to follow." "Just now Pakistan seems to have prohibited the most radical group of Mujahideen which operated in Kashmir. If this is the case and has real consequences, I can only welcome this step. Others have to follow, however," he said.

Mr. Vajpayee declared that he would retire if he failed in his efforts for peace with Pakistan. Asked what he would do if his "third and final" attempt for peace with Pakistan were to fail, Mr. Vajpayee said: "I have to accept my defeat, then I retire." — UNI

BERLIN, MAY 28. India has approved the candidature of Aziz Ahmed Khan as the new Pakistani High Commissioner to New Delhi, officials accompanying the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, said this evening.

Islamabad too had given speedy approval to the appointment of Shiv Shankar Menon as India's Envoy to Pakistan. Both countries should now see an early return of the High Commissioners to the respective capitals.

India wants peace with all its neighbours: PM

TIMES NEWS NETWORK & PTI

Gangtok: Without naming Pakistan, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said on Sunday that India wanted peace and friendship with all its neighbours, but added, "one cannot clap with one hand".

"We want peace and friendship with all our neighbours. But we cannot clap with one hand. Either side can only take the initiative for peace," he told a public meeting here.

Referring to the US-led war on Iraq, he said, "It is good the war in Iraq has ended, paving the way for peace and development."

The prime minister unveiled an economic package from Sikkim, including central assistance worth Rs 110 crore for the construction of an airport at Pakyong, 28 kms from Gangtok. This would be in addition to the Rs 50 crore released by the eleventh finance commission for the purpose.

The PM also promised central help for the construction of an alternative road connecting Gangtok with north Bengal. But he did not mention the amount. Pending the construction of the road, the present NH-31A

would be developed.

He emphasised that Sikkim should not miss out on the benefits of the corridor connecting Ambala with Garo Hills. Besides, it is an oft-repeated complaint in Sikkim that the entire state gets cut off because of frequent bandh calls in the Darjeeling hills, as a large part of NH-31A passes through the Kalimpong subdivision.

The PM said tourist facilities would have to be developed in Sikkim. "Made by God, Sikkim is like Nandankanan," he said. "Its scenic beauty is comparable to Kashmir's." He promised central support for development of tourism in the state.

The Prime Minister also promised that the Gangtok government hospital would be modernised with central finance. It will be linked to the All India Institute of Medical Science in Delhi to provide telemedicine facility.

Mr Vajpayee praised the Pawan Chamling government for free distribution of LPG cylinders to people below the poverty line. Besides helping the poor, the move would also help save forest, he noted. He stressed the need for women's education in Sikkim, particularly the study of science.

14 APR 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

I'll retire if peace bid fails: PM

By Manoj Joshi
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Berlin: German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder on Wednesday welcomed India's new initiative for peace in Jammu and Kashmir and said he would tell Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf that he should provide an "appropriate" and constructive response to India's initiative.

Chancellor Schroeder was speaking at a joint briefing on the first full day of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's official visit here.

Asked what he would tell Gen Musharraf—who is expected to visit Germany in late June while travelling to or from the US—Mr Schroeder said there was probably an apocryphal old Indian saying that "never talk about a guest till you have spoken to him". He then said he would ask the General to make an appropriate response—including on the anti-terrorism issue—to the PM's initiative. He said he had no hesitation in declaring that he "admired" Mr Vajpayee's repeated efforts to achieve a solution in Kashmir.

In their opening remarks, following talks and a working lunch, both leaders said that they shared an identity of views on a wide spectrum of international issues, particularly international terrorism.

Asked by a German correspondent why India did not permit a plebiscite in Kashmir, Mr Vajpayee came out with the standard response that India was a democracy that held periodic and routine elections. Recently, he said, "the people of Jammu and Kashmir had participated in an election. Pakistan tried to block the effort and many people were killed, but large numbers of people had come out to vote. It's clear what the people of J&K want".

(Earlier, in an interview to the widely-circulated German daily *Der Spiegel*, Mr Vajpayee observed that the resolution of the Kashmir problem would require "serious compromises" and said he was prepared to negotiate with Gen Musharraf, PTI reports said. "I am prepared to negotiate with him," Mr Vajpayee said when asked if he considered Gen Musharraf "trustworthy".

On Tuesday evening, apprising the Indian community of his latest peace initiatives with Pakistan, including the decision to resume the Delhi-Lahore bus service, Mr Vajpayee said that "this time the bus will not break down".

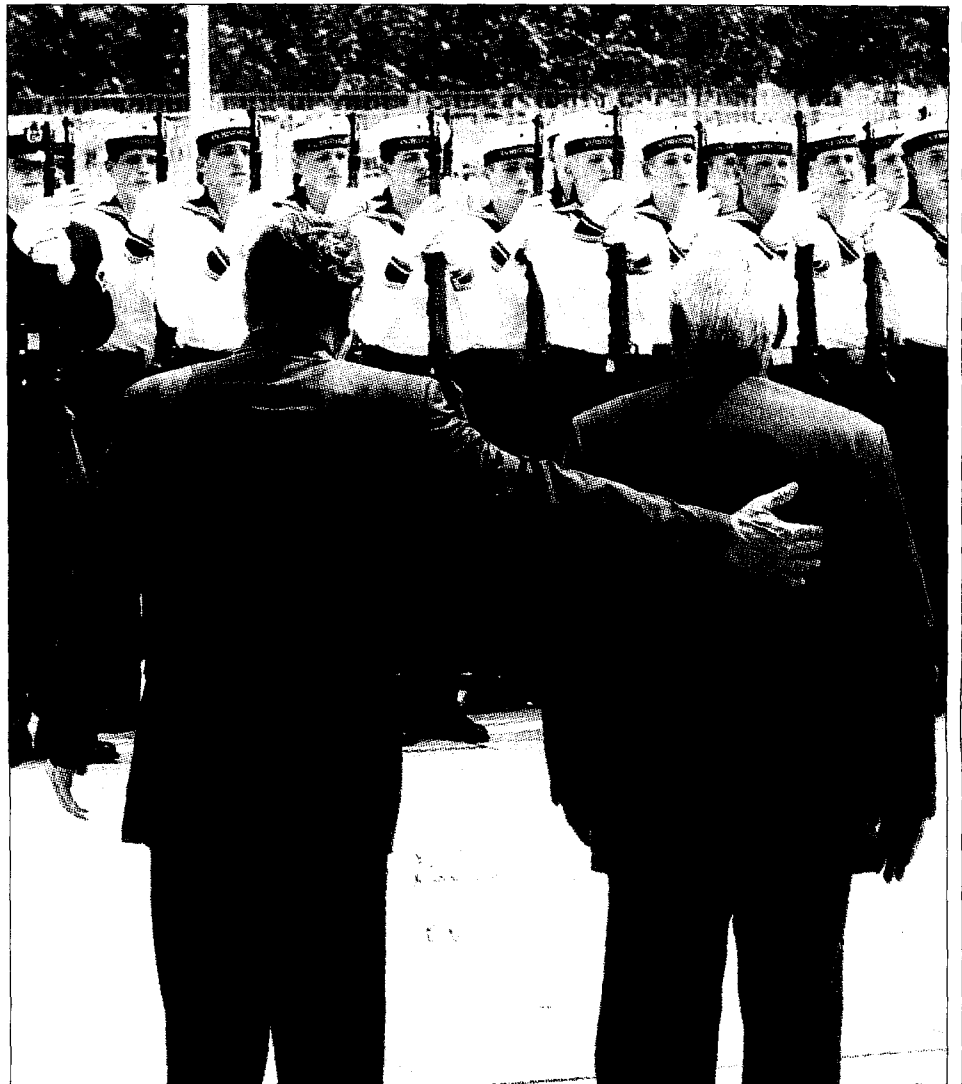
Asked by the newspaper what would happen if his stated last peace initiative failed, Mr Vajpayee shot back, "Then I have to accept my defeat, then I retire."

Welcoming the restrictions imposed by Pakistan on the Hizbul Mujahideen, he said other steps would have to follow. "Just now, Pakistan seems to have prohibited the most radical group of mujahideen operating in Kashmir. If this is the case and has real consequences, I can only welcome this step. Others have to follow, however," he said.

To a question on what role the US had to play when India has so far rejected any mediation from outside, he said that in the age of globalisation and in an increasingly closer world the international community was concerned about the Indo-Pak tensions.

"We (India and US) are partners in an interna-

Schroeder to shoulder—'Ich bin ein Berliner'



Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee is led by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder (left) as they review a guard of honour at the Chancellery in Berlin on Wednesday.

tional coalition against terrorism, and to fight it (terrorism) everywhere we have to support each other. For this reason the US plays a role in this conflict, and we encourage it to do it effectively."

"In all matters concerning exclusively India and Pakistan, America does not play any role. I think Washington has understood and accepted this," he said.

Asked about Islamabad's suggestion that both countries entirely give up their nuclear arsenals, he said disarming "our nuclear arsenals" would affect a much larger region and would not only be limited to India, Pakistan or even south Asia. "It (the nuclear issue) cannot be negotiated bilaterally for this reason. Do not forget that renunciation of the first-strike right is part of the Indian nuclear doctrine," he said.)

Mr Vajpayee said he appreciated Germany's "understanding of the problems faced by us from cross-border terrorism". Without refer-

ring to Germany's estrangement from the US in the run up to the Iraq war, he noted that the two countries also "share a vision of a cooperative multipolar world order".

Mr Schroeder said that given the "excellent" relations between the two countries, "we did not talk so much about problems" but the need to reinforce scientific and technical cooperation. He said there was good cooperation between the two in information technology that was well known, as well as the lesser known relationship in promoting renewable energy resources, especially wind energy.

Both the leaders said they would like to maintain a tradition of annual summits, and to this end, Mr Vajpayee invited Mr Schroeder to visit India again in 2004. The chancellor had last visited India in October 2001.

● PM on song in Berlin, Page 9

Terrorism must end for talks: PM

MANALI, MAY 13. ¹⁴¹⁵ Maintaining that India was not setting any conditions, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today said it was necessary that terrorist infrastructure across the border be dismantled and terrorism ended for a conducive atmosphere to be created for a dialogue with Pakistan.

"Terrorism should end. Terrorist camps and infrastructure across the border should be dismantled. That will open the door for talks," he told reporters here on arrival for a six-day holiday here. Asked if an end to cross-border was a pre-condition for talks, Mr. Vajpayee said "it is not a condition... it is nec-

essary. We are not calling it a pre-condition. But without that (end to cross-border terrorism) how can a conducive atmosphere be created?"

To a question about Pakistan's stand that talks should be unconditional, he said, "(the talk of) unconditional (talks) has no meaning" .. — PTI

4 MAY 2003

THE HINDU

Two KLO men in abduction dragnet

OUR BUREAU

April 26: Raids on suspected militant hideouts after the abduction of a fuel pump owner's son from Mainaguri yielded two Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) militants, one of whom is suspected to be involved in the kidnapping.

Kailash Roy, alias Lob, was picked up from Dhulagaon in Cooch Behar's Alipurduar while Ramesh Burman, also known as Bhupen Kayat, was arrested from Ghatparchilbari near Alipurduar.

Police had spread their net wide in Cooch Behar and Assam after raids yesterday in Jalpaiguri drew a blank. Pratik Banerjee was taken away at gunpoint by four persons, reportedly belonging to the KLO, from his Mainaguri service station on the busy Dhupguri Road on Thursday evening.

Alipurduar additional superintendent of police R. Shivkumar said Burman was in all probability involved in the abduction of Banerjee.

Jalpaiguri police superintendent Siddh Nath Gupta said the two were being interrogated to ascertain whether both were part of the gang of four that abducted Banerjee. "Kailash, we know, had a hand in an attempt to kidnap the son of a local CPM leader, Subal Mondol, in Falakata last month. We are intensely carrying out the interrogation," Gupta said.

Shivkumar told reporters at Alipurduar they

had specific information that Ramesh was trained by Ulfa militants at their Dalimbasti training camp in Bhutan. "Out of a batch of 66 KLO militants, only 16 were handpicked and sent to the training camp and Ramesh was among them," he said.

Ramesh, who was paraded before reporters in the afternoon, gave details of his stint with the KLO. In 2001, Kalia, a front-ranking KLO militant, took him to the Bhutan camp where he underwent training in handling firearms and explosives for three months. "The political classes were taken by Milton Barma, Anup Roy and Nilambar Rajbanshi and it was in the Ulfa headquarters, deep in the Bhutan forests, where I met Pranati Deka, senior Ulfa member, as well as the chief of the outfit, Paresh Barua," Ramesh said.

He said an AK-56 rifle was issued to him after he was appointed as a security guard to Sandhikhan, a self-styled Ulfa major.

Claiming that he was adept at handling assault rifles, explosives and rocket-propelled grenades, Ramesh admitted that he was involved in an encounter with the army at Badlapara in Assam. The Ulfa camps had anti-aircraft guns which could bring down helicopters, he told the press.

At Mainaguri, businessmen went on a 12-hour bandh today, demanding that police rescue Banerjee within 24 hours. They also took out a rally demanding police action.

'I want to try one more time'

Vajpayee says Iraq is a warning to ^{w/4} developing countries, now is the chance for India and Pak

BHAVNA VIJ-AURORA
SRINAGAR | APRIL 19

AS his offer of a 'hand of friendship' to Pakistan echoed in the country and across the border, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee went a step ahead today and said he was awaiting the neighbouring nation's response to his invitation to talks.

"If Pakistan announces tomorrow that cross-border terrorism has stopped and it has destroyed all training camps, I am willing to send a senior foreign ministry official to Islamabad to finalise the agenda, the same day," he said, adding that he wanted to talk soon.

"I want to try one more time honestly. I am willing to talk on any issue including Jammu and Kashmir. And I hope to get a favourable response from Pakistan," he said.

He said that India and Pakistan could not keep up the hype of an impending war anymore. "Now is an opportunity to end it," he added. The situation in the world was changing. Giving the example of Iraq war, Vajpayee said, "It is a warning to the entire world, specially the developing countries." However, he added that talks could not be one-sided and Pakistan had to realise there was some onus on it too. He did not expect Pakistan to make a public declaration but said that its



NEW BEGINNING 'But if I dream, I also see it coming true'

behaviour and activities will reveal its intentions. As long as terrorists were being trained for infiltration, there could not be any meaningful talks, he said.

On what he termed as a day of new beginnings, Vajpayee announced a special package for the state, his second in as many years, which addressed unemployment, in-

frastructure and tourism.

Addressing a press conference at the end of his pathfinding visit to Kashmir, Vajpayee clarified that it

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2


gets termination notice on oil project

have pledged only
ising loan: Ministry

sharing contract (PSC), signed in October 1994, will be terminated.

Videocon, which holds 25 per cent equity in Ravva, issued debentures worth Rs 990 crore to financial institutions with revenue receivables from the oil field as security. This security is being held in trust with Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) through a Debenture Trust Deed (DTD) ensuring the rights of the debenture holders.

The ministry says that

GOVTSPEAK	DHOOTSPEAK
<p>■ It appears that Videocon, in the DTD, has not disclosed its participating interest under the Ravva PSC....the description of the property appears to be misleading</p>	<p>■ There is no irregularity and we will be explaining our position...It is a usual letter. It is not the first time that we have received it.</p>
 <p>DHOOT</p>	

equity in Ravva field, or part thereof, while raising the loan. "It appears that Videocon, in the DTD, has not disclosed its participating interest under the Ravva PSC. As such, the description of the property given in the

misleading," the ministry says in its termination notice dated April 16.

Moreover, the debenture holders can recover their loan from the revenue earned from the oil field, thereby shifting liabilities on all four

Videocon alone. In fact, Petroleum Secretary B K Chaturvedi wrote to IDBI chairman last October advising him to correct this anomaly in the deed so that "no liabilities would attach to either the government or any other party to the Ravva PSC."

Ravva oil field, which produces 50,000 barrels of oil per day, is also owned by government-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (40 per cent), Cairn Energy (India) Pty Limited (22.5 per cent) and Marubeni Corporation 12.5 per cent.

Another violation pointed out by the ministry is that finance raised by Videocon was not entirely utilised

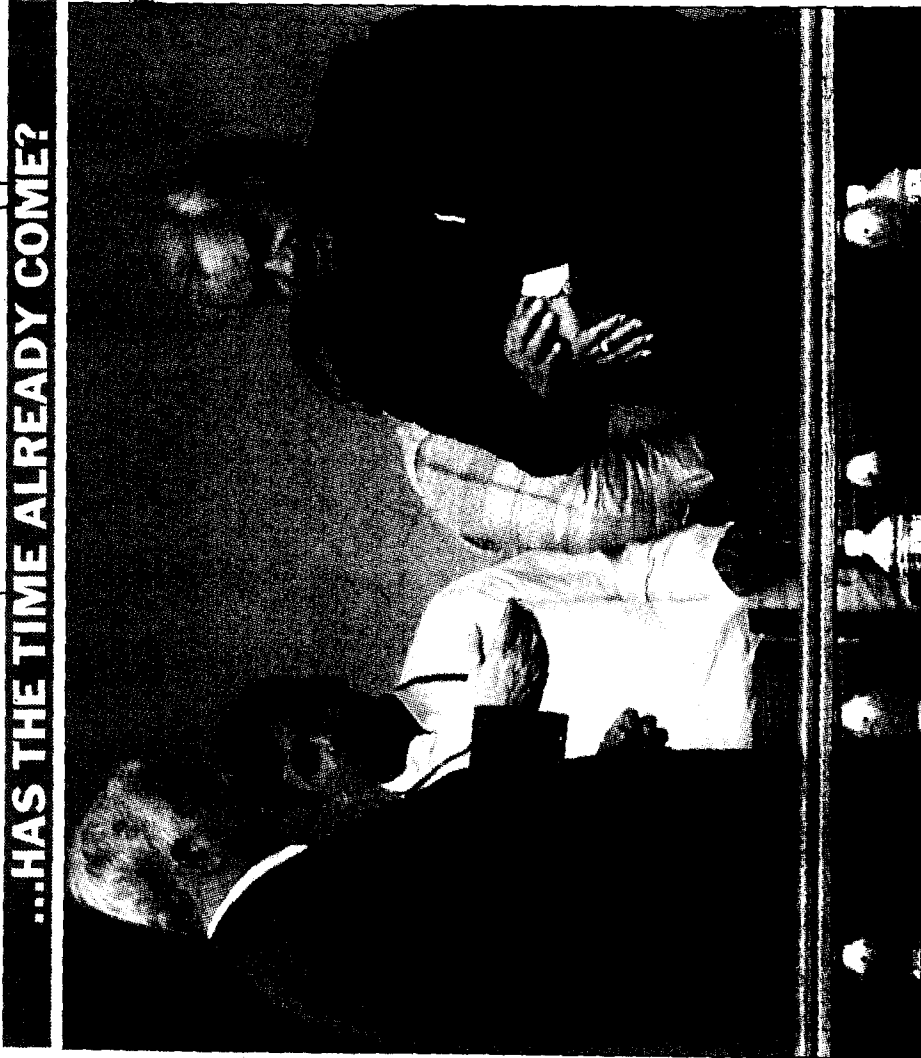
Respiratory Infection

TONSIL AID

20 APR

Atal ready for Pak talks, but...

...HAS THE TIME ALREADY COME?



Atal Bihari Vajpayee with Mufti Mohammad Sayeed at the rally on Friday. (PTI)

SEEMA GUHA

Srinagar, April 18: Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee today appeared to indicate he was willing to go the extra mile to resume talks with Pakistan, but slipped in a rider that left doubts if there was any real change in Delhi's stand.

"I am ready to talk both at home and abroad... but bloodshed must first stop," Vajpayee said at a huge public rally at the Sher-e-Kashmir Stadium, the first by an Indian Prime Minister since militancy erupted in Jammu and Kashmir in 1989.

India has so far insisted that it would not resume talks until cross-border terrorism stops. Today, Vajpayee did not mention infiltration. Still, it was not clear if the Prime Minister meant he was ready to meet General Pervez Musharraf now.

"India wants to live in peace with its neighbours. I went to Lahore with just that in mind but Kargil happened. Again, I invited General saab to Agra, hoping that the sight of the Taj Mahal would inspire us but that, too, did not happen. I am again ready to extend the hand of friendship provided there is reciprocity," Vajpayee added.

If there was any ambiguity in Vajpayee's statement, Pakistan

did not believe so nor did his own party, the BJP. Party president M. Venkatesh Naidu said the BJP was opposed to talks with Islamabad.

"There is no question of talks as the time is not yet ripe till Islamabad stops encouraging militants," Naidu said. "There is no question of any softness towards terrorist groups."

Pakistan showed immediate "reciprocity." "If they take one step, we are ready to take two steps," information minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed told Reuters.

The Hurriyat also appeared to collect the same signal, deciding to call off tomorrow's general strike it had proposed to coincide with Vajpayee's visit.

As the Prime Minister appeared to publicly back chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's efforts for a new beginning in Kashmir, his People's Democratic Party (PDP) went all out to mobilise supporters for the rally. Roughly 20,000 people gath-

QUOTE

I am again ready to extend the hand of friendship provided there is reciprocity

ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE

ered despite the general strike call. The chief minister's daughter, Mehbooba Mufti, is said to have worked tirelessly to mobilise the crowds.

But the Congress, a coalition partner, was conspicuous by its absence. Green PDP flags fluttered everywhere and the slogans were for Mufti, not for Vajpayee. "Neither grenades nor guns, only talks can resolve the problem," PDP supporters shouted.

Vajpayee made it clear Mufti was the man to change Kashmir's destiny and that the Centre was fully behind him. For the National Conference, which is supporting the government from outside, the lavish praise of Mufti must have struck a bitter chord.

Vajpayee said elections had brought a sea change in Kashmir and it was important that this opportunity is nurtured. "Mufti's hands have to be strengthened. Together the state and the Centre will work for the future.... Knock on Delhi's door whenever you want, the door will always be open," the Prime Minister said.

"I know you have suffered a lot in the last few years, but Kashmir's destiny will change... the weather is already changing and spring will come again."

See Page 6

Atal holds out olive branch to Pak

Islamabad
welcomes
PM's gesture

Arjun Joshi
Srinagar, April 18

ON A DAY America finally lost its patience with Pakistan for its continuing export of terror into Kashmir, Atal Bihari Vajpayee patiently gave Islamabad another chance at friendship with Delhi.

An upbeat Vajpayee capped his visit to the Valley — the first by a Prime Minister in 15 years — by offering Pakistan "the hand of friendship" in return for its cooperation to end the bloodshed in the Valley.

On Friday morning, the Bush administration had made its strongest criticism of Pakistan since the September 11 attacks. It expressed "frustration and disappointment" at Islamabad's failure to stop cross-border terrorism and warned that this could "limit" Pakistan's ties with Washington.

The US statement had also warned India not to launch any pre-emptive action against Pakistan — a possibility mooted recently by External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha. At Srinagar's packed Sher-e-Kashmir stadium, Vajpayee said just what Washington wanted to hear from him.

The Prime Minister mentioned his disappointment after the peace missions in Lahore and Agra fell flat, but went on to say "We are once again willing to extend the hand of friendship



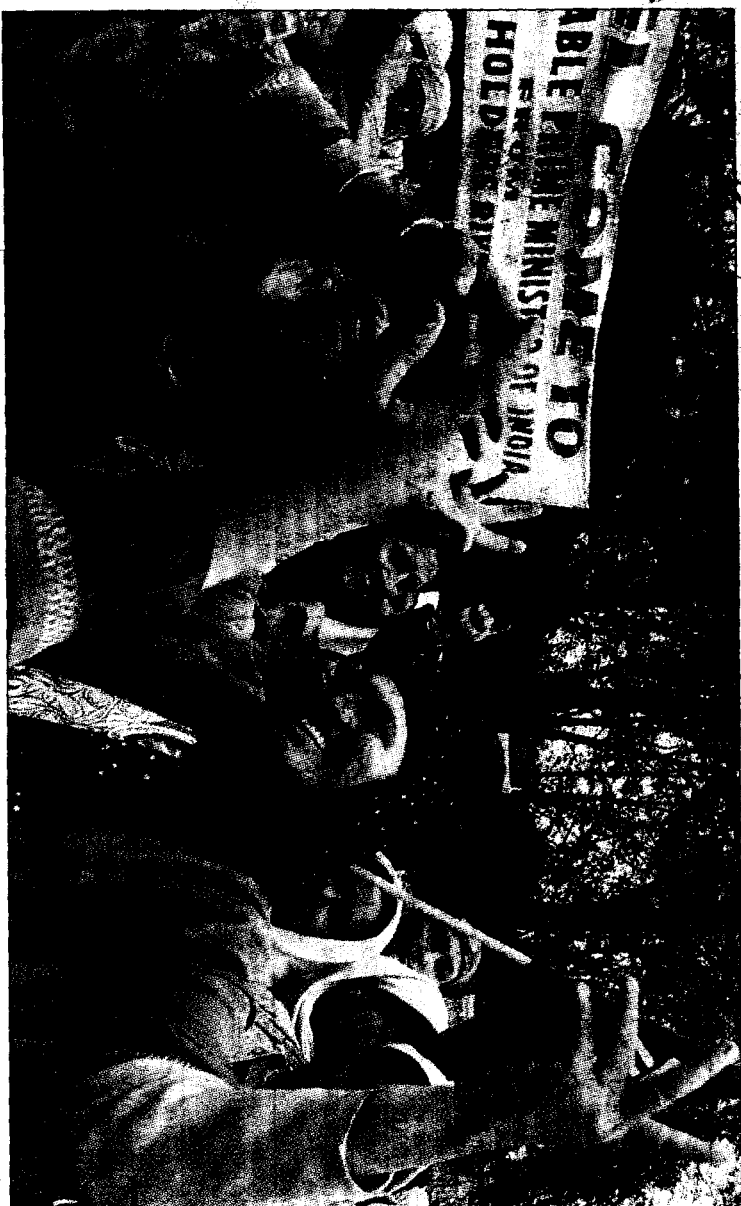
HEALING TOUCH: (Left) Mufri Mohammad Sayeed and Atal Bihari Vajpayee greet supporters at a rally in Srinagar on Friday. (Right) People dance before listening to the PM's speech.

(to Pakistan). But this should be from both sides. Both sides should decide that they have to live together."

Pakistan quickly welcomed the gesture. Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali said, "I welcome this offer and appreciate it but the basic principles on issues will remain the same."

"Pakistan will go two steps forward if India will take one step," added Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed.

But in New Delhi, the VHP saw only "weakness" in Vajpayee's offer. "I am surprised that



despite such bitter experiences in the past, the government is repeatedly talking peace with Pakistan," VHP senior vice-president Giriraj Kishore said.

"Those who do not learn from past experiences bring harm to themselves and the nation, to be a leader, the entire society and the country suffers."

Vajpayee had stopped short of offering talks to Pakistan, though. Delhi's stand has again only after cross-border terrorism ends. The Prime Minister, however, signalled his readi-

ness for discussions with Kashmiris to solve their problems, saying: "Talks leading to justice must get under way."

"We are for resolution of all internal or external issues. This land of saints and Sufis is sick of bloodshed and violence," Vajpayee told a 30,000-strong gathering, drawing cheers as he quoted a Kashmiri poet to emphasise his point.

"Wala ho baghawan, nau baharuk shaan paida kar, pholan gul gah karan bulbul, timay saman paida kar (Let us build an atmosphere where flowers

bloom, birds chirp and play and it will be a paradise)," Vajpayee recited from Mehtoor's couplet.

It was Vajpayee's promise of jobs that drew the loudest cheers from the crowd, mostly flag-waving People's Democratic Party supporters. "I know unemployment is a big curse in Jammu & Kashmir, we have to remove it,"

the Prime Minister said, listing a series of job-creating measures, such as building of roads and development of information technology in the state.

The mood in the stadium, however, was in sharp contrast to that

outside. The streets were deserted in response to a general strike called by the Hurrayat Conference. Ministers and legislators of the Congress, the major partner in the coalition government, also stayed away from the rally.

The audience was primarily rural, herded into the venue in chartered buses. They carried green flags and some of them danced to drum beats and shouted slogans such as "Na grenade se, na goli se, baat banaegi bohi se (dialogue, not grenades or bullets, will solve problems)".

More reports on Page

We want peace with neighbours: PM

GANGTOK, APRIL 13. Without naming Pakistan, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today said India wanted peace and friendship with all its neighbours but added "one cannot clap with one hand".

At a public meeting at the TNA grounds here, Mr. Vajpayee also spoke about peace on the border.

"We want peace and friendship with all our neighbours. But, we cannot clap with one hand. The initiative for peace can be

taken by either side," he said. "Somebody said one cannot clap with one hand. What if one has only one hand?"

"*Ham ne kaha chutki bajane ke liye. Lekin chutki me bhi shanti ke baat honi chahiye* (I asked them to snap their fingers. But then even that should be done with the message of peace)," he said.

Referring to the Iraq war, he said "it is good the war in Iraq has ended, paving the way for peace and development."

The Prime Minister praised

the State Government for keeping the population growth in check. "Our aim should be to fight illiteracy, hunger and poverty. We have always stood for this. We have never hankered after power, for, after all, we were in the opposition for 50 years."

Stating that the Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, had placed a list of demands before him, Mr. Vajpayee said he would extend as much Central assistance as possible to fulfil them. — PTI, UNI

19 APR 2003

THE HINDU

Back in business

Ghisingh gets restless in virtual confinement

It is well known that every time Subash Ghisingh finds himself in trouble he exercises his lung power in support of his old demand for Gorkhaland. No one takes him seriously, not even his own party, the Gorkha National Liberation Front, which he now says consists of "rotten eggs". The reason for his latest discomfiture is not clear except that he lives in virtual confinement after the unsuccessful attempt on his life in February 2001. Those aware of his lifestyle, may not find surprising that the life of a recluse is not something Ghisingh relishes. At the same time, his absence from public life gives ideas to rivals. Some who have openly declared their defiance have moved out and tried to fight him from outside — not with much success. There are others who have considered it prudent to bide their time. The GNLF's supremo's latest outburst — "the fire within my breast is not dead" — is probably directed against the Centre to remind them that funds should keep coming. It could also be a signal to his colleagues in the party that he is still boss.

It is understandable that the Centre has chosen not to take any notice of these strident noises and left it to the state government to deal with the problem. Gorkhaland has never figured in the Centre's calculation ever since the setting up of the autonomous Hill Council in 1988. What is indeed surprising is the Left Front's inability to deal with Ghisingh's chronic defiance and mismanagement of development funds. If the state government can take a tough line against the Kamtapuris, there is no reason to go soft on Ghisingh. There is unassailable evidence that Darjeeling, once called the queen of hill stations, has lost a good deal of its attractions on account of the decline in civic amenities. It is no consolation that Ghisingh calls his own councillors in the municipal body "420s" and threatens to "discard the rotten eggs before they hatch". They are his creations. Darjeeling can expect nothing better as long as Ghisingh puts his own ambitions above everything else — and holds himself accountable to no one.

18 APR 2003

THE STATESMAN

India wants peace with all its neighbours: PM

TIMES NEWS NETWORK & PTI

Gangtok: Without naming Pakistan, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said on Sunday that India wanted peace and friendship with all its neighbours, but added, "one cannot clap with one hand".

"We want peace and friendship with all our neighbours. But we cannot clap with one hand. Either side can only take the initiative for peace," he told a public meeting here.

Referring to the US-led war on Iraq, he said, "It is good the war in Iraq has ended, paving the way for peace and development."

The prime minister unveiled an economic package from Sikkim, including central assistance worth Rs 110 crore for the construction of an airport at Pakyong, 28 kms from Gangtok. This would be in addition to the Rs 50 crore released by the eleventh finance commission for the purpose.

The PM also promised central help for the construction of an alternative road connecting Gangtok with north Bengal. But he did not mention the amount. Pending the construction of the road, the present NH-31A

would be developed.

He emphasised that Sikkim should not miss out on the benefits of the corridor connecting Ambala with Garo Hills. Besides, it is an oft-repeated complaint in Sikkim that the entire state gets cut off because of frequent bandh calls in the Darjeeling hills, as a large part of NH-31A passes through the Kalimpong subdivision.

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14 APR 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

'CONSENSUS WILL EMERGE ON WOMEN'S BILL'

40-1
9/3

All-out efforts should be made to avert war: PM

By Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI, MARCH 8. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, talked of making all-out efforts "till the last" to maintain peace in the Middle East and said efforts were on to bring about "unanimity" on the Women's Reservation Bill.

The occasion was "high tea" hosted by him at his residence for women journalists from the print and electronic media on the International Women's Day.

Although the Prime Minister advised the scribes to put away their notepads and pens and enjoy the party, he began with his opening remarks on the Iraq situation.

Addressing the gathering of nearly 700 journalists, he said war clouds were hovering over Iraq and efforts should be made to avert a conflagration. "War clouds are hovering... You never know when the war might break out but more effort should be made till the last moment to avert war," he said from a makeshift rostrum. Later, mingling with the

gathering and taking a few questions, he referred to his telephonic talk with the United States President, George W. Bush, on Tuesday and said that he had conveyed to him that India did not want war. To a specific query, he said India had enough oil reserves to tide over the situation in case of an eventuality.

Asked about the Women's

It is up to PM to evolve consensus, says Sonia: Page 8

Reservation Bill, Mr. Vajpayee asserted that a "consensus will emerge on the Bill." He had spoken today to the Congress leader, Manmohan Singh, and the Samajwadi Party president, Mulayam Singh Yadav, and urged them to bring about "unanimity" on the Bill. There was consensus on giving reservation to women and efforts were now on for "unanimity" on the quota.

He said he told Mr. Yadav that he should rethink his stand on supporting the Bill

and try to bring about "unanimity."

It was only for brief moments that the Prime Minister mixed with the women journalists on the lawns of 7, Race Course Road. When the polite questions threatened to turn into a tirade, the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Sushma Swaraj, escorted him back to the rostrum behind a cordon. This was in stark contrast with the previous two years, when the Prime Minister freely interacted with the participants.

This time round, the security was tight — all handbags were held back and objections raised to carrying even pens — but it was polite and not intrusive.

For the best part of the evening, Mr. Vajpayee posed for photographs with enthusiastic new-comers to the profession.

He even answered specific questions and did not seem to mind when asked time and again about the Women's Reservation Bill.

THE HINDU

9 MAR 2003

I would rather die than eat beef, says PM

Sudesh K Verma in Mandi

Feb. 20. — Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee today stressed the need to ban cow slaughter and “the desirability of building a Ram Temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya”. He challenged the Congress to take a stand on these issues and asked them not to confuse people by their ambivalence.

Mr Vajpayee, visibly hurt by Congress allegations in Madhya Pradesh that “the Prime Minister eats beef”, declared before a large gathering at the Paddal ground here that he would prefer to die than to eat beef (*gau mans khane se pehle mar jana pasand karunga*).

Later at a rally in Shimla, Mr Vajpayee said: “The Congress is propagating that I eat beef ... they are putting up posters. It’s a wrong, baseless and malicious campaign. It can rouse feelings. I am telling our partymen to restrain themselves.”

Youth Congress pamphlets have been doing the rounds in Bhopal, saying that beef exports have gone up during the BJP government’s rule and accusing the Prime Minister of being a beef-eater. “*Kahan pakta hai, kahan bikta hai ... bahut jagah band hai, bahut jaldi har jagah band ho jayega* (it’s cooked somewhere ... it’s sold some-

where ... it is banned in most places, very soon it will be banned everywhere), Mr Vajpayee said, indirectly declaring the BJP’s agenda in Parliament. “I ask the Congress to take a stand whether or not it wants a ban on cow slaughter. I have written to Sonia Gandhiji asking her to stop the Congress from spreading the rumours. I

have not received a reply yet. When she comes here you ask her,” he added.

While the Prime Minister was speaking to a largely Hindu electorate, he also seemed to be addressing the Sangh’s concerns, particularly in view of the VHP’s *dharam sansad* on Monday. Mr Vajpayee said he believed a temple existed at the site of the disputed structure, but he would abide by the Court’s verdict.

“We want to construct the Ram temple. Let the Court decide. We are confident that after going through the historical facts, this would establish that there existed a temple before the mosque. Even if it does not get established, we will abide by the Court verdict. Let the Congress say it would abide by the Court verdict.”

Cong on posters: The Congress high command today distanced itself from the controversial posters. “We have nothing to do with such posters,” Mr Jaipal Reddy said, reports PTI.



Cooking and eating beef will soon stop everywhere ... I have written to Sonia Gandhi asking her to stop her party from spreading rumours

'RESOLVE DISPUTE THROUGH U.N. MEDIATION'

HO 1
29/11

Avoid war with Iraq, Vajpayee tells superpowers

9-P.M

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, JAN. 28. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has advised the superpowers to avoid war with Iraq and resolve the issue through negotiation. Asking the superpowers to show "great restraint", Mr. Vajpayee said a war in the Persian Gulf would disturb the balance there. All efforts should be made to avoid a conflict and solve the dispute through negotiation with the mediation of the United Nations. Most European nations and also the Iraqi people did not want war. He was not aware if the superpowers were thinking on these lines but at times there was a need for a "mahashakti" (super power) to show "mahasanyam" (great patience).

Without naming the United States, he said war clouds were hovering over Iraq but India always believed that war was not a way to solve any dispute. "It is time the superpower showed some restraint and sought U.N. mediation to resolve the dispute." He cautioned that a war could push up the prices of petrol and petroleum products as India received a bulk of its supply from the Gulf countries.

Mr. Vajpayee was speaking after dedicating to the nation the first phase of the Ahmedabad-Vadodara express highway. This would eventually form part of his dream 'Golden Quadrilateral', which would connect the four metro cities. The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the Gujarat Governor, Sunder Singh Bhandari, the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, and the Union Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways, B.C. Khanduri, were present.



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, and the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, at the Inaugural function of the Ahmedabad-Vadodara Express Highway in Ahmedabad on Tuesday. — PTI

Mr. Vajpayee referred to Iraq while talking about the expected reduction in the consumption of petrol once the project was completed. Each arm of the quadrangle was expected to help reduce petrol consumption by about Rs. 8,000 crores a year. The country imported petroleum products worth Rs. 90,000 crores every year.

Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Advani regretted that not much attention had been paid after Independence to the development of roads, which was key to progress. India had the potential to be counted among the most developed countries and the world was surprised that this had not happened. The development of roads was not a political issue but the backbone of progress.

Saying that his Government was keen on creating a network of roads all over the country, Mr. Vajpayee said speedy trans-

portation could help in the export of raw products to European countries, which would help improve village economy and ensure progress. The road from Kanyakumari to Kashmir would come as a boost to the unity and integrity of the country as people from the south would be able to reach Kashmir "without any stop".

Mr. Advani expressed confidence that Mr. Vajpayee's dream projects — the road network and the inter-linking of rivers, for which a task force under a former Union Minister, Suresh Prabhu, had already been appointed — would help change the face of the country.

Mr. Vajpayee avoided any promise to Mr. Modi, who during his earlier remarks wanted the Centre to allocate funds under the 'Prime Minister's village road scheme' to Gujarat.

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Vajpayee's musings draw flak

By Our New Delhi Bureau

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NEW DELHI, JAN. 1. The Congress and the Left parties today criticised the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's "musings" from Goa. The Congress took exception to the Prime Minister equating Hindutva with Indianness. "We don't accept his equating the Hindutva of the bigoted mindsets with Indianness," said the party spokesperson, Anand Sharma.

He described "Bhartiyata" as "all-inclusive, assimilative and full of compassion" and contrasted it with the Hindutva which was a "political manoeuvre used to distort a great culture for political ends".

The Congress said that it would have been better if Mr. Vajpayee had used the "Goa pulpit to warn of the presence of sinister-minded and foreign-funded forces. It would have been appropriate had the Prime Minister reassured the nation about using the powers of his Government to bring the VHP to book".

The Left parties also criticised the musings, with the CPI saying that Mr. Vajpayee had "tried hard to hoodwink the people" and sell Hindutva as a legitimate and acceptable concept.

In a statement, the CPI central secretariat said the musings clearly reflected Mr. Vajpayee's 'tradition of double-talk'. "His invocations of the names of Tagore and Vivekananda are intended to deceive the people. By doing so, he has defended Hindutva as a Swayamsevak, which he claims he will remain ever".

The party said Mr. Vajpayee had no mind to condemn the Gujarat 'pogrom'. As part of his "routine trick", he had created a new debate on secularism. "Secularism always means separation of religion, be it Hinduism or Islam, from State politics and education. Any other interpretation of secularism is deceptive and is a justification of the hate campaign against the minorities," the statement said.

In a subtle way, the Prime Minister, had presented his musings on the basis of his understandings of Golwalkar and Veer Savarkar.

Not naming the RSS and the VHP itself shows where his sympathy lies, the CPI said.

"The musings of the Prime Minister are part of a calculated strategy to mislead the people and to bring Hindutva, be it hard or soft, in the focus of debate. The Prime Minister wants to avoid debate on real socio-economic issues," the party said.

Echoing similar views, the CPI(M) politburo member, S. Ramachandran Pillai, said the musings contained nothing new and charged the Prime Minister with "trying to confuse the people".

There had always been a division of work between the BJP, the RSS/Sangh Parivar affiliates such as the VHP, with one speaking a harsh language and the other taking a softer line. "They speak in different voices," he said.

'ALL INDIANS HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS'

Hindutva brooks no hatred: PM

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, DEC. 31. Describing as "unfortunate and unacceptable" the interpretation that is being put on Hindutva by "some people in a narrow, rigid and extremist manner," the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has spoken against the recent spurt of extremism in the country. "Hindutva is liberal, liberating and brooks no ill-will, hatred or violence among different communities on any ground," he said in his 'musings' from his holiday camp in Goa.

Without naming the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Mr. Vajpayee sought to distance himself and his regime from the strident voices that have emanated from a section of the Sangh Parivar after the Gujarat vote. Addressing himself to the critics at home and abroad, he said he stood by secularism; and, according to him, "secularism is a concept of the state, enjoining upon it the duty to show respect for all faiths and to practise no discrimination among citizens on the basis of their beliefs".

As he has done in the last two years, Mr. Vajpayee chose the New Year-eve to communicate a few stray thoughts to those

within and outside the Government. The exercise, spelling out his thinking, also sought to re-inforce his position as someone who stood at some distance from the "Parivar crowd".

Asserting that people should have an understanding of Hindutva "which is forward-looking, not one that seeks to take us back", the Prime Minister called "the current controversy over Hindutva wholly unnecessary". It is "incorrect and untenable" to pit secularism against Hindutva "under the belief that the two are antithetical to one another." For him, "there is no difference between such (an enlightened Hindutva) and Bharateeyata (Indianness)".

This Bharateeyata, as also enlightened Hindutva, affirmed "that India belongs to all, and all belong to India. It means that all Indians have equal rights and equal responsibilities. It entails recognition of our common national culture, which is enriched by all the diverse religious and non-religious traditions in India. For centuries, both have synonymously pointed to our national identity." And, it is this Indianness that "we should all celebrate and further strengthen".

Mr. Vajpayee cautioned that this Indian-

ness had to be strengthened "in spite of every provocation, big or small, coming from our western neighbour." Finding it odd that even after all these years Pakistan had not accepted "the unchangeable reality of a united and secular India", he said its "campaign of jihadi terrorism is doomed to fail".

Mr. Vajpayee said that "Pakistan cannot fight religious extremism and modernise itself as long as it chooses to be in a position of permanent confrontation with India". Reminding Pakistan of the futility of its insistence on the "centrality" of the Kashmir issue, Mr. Vajpayee invited Islamabad to a regime of strengthened ties. His Government had neither given in to a directionless drift nor given up on governance. He spoke enthusiastically of a number of initiatives, clubbed together as "connectivity revolution". Beyond connectivity in areas such as highways, telecom, internet, river, he talked of the "connectivity of the hearts and minds of one billion Indians".

Spurning the increasingly partisan noises from within the ruling party, Mr. Vajpayee talks of expanding "the areas of consensus on economic and other urgent reforms".

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