

I was prevented from returning to power: Benazir

Sharif's aides say two cells were set up to rout a PPP victory

ISLAMABAD, Aug 5: Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said Monday she has been vindicated by two political opponents who acknowledged vote rigging caused her defeat in last year's elections, reports AP.

Ms. Bhutto has steadfastly maintained she was prevented from returning to power through massive rigging. The conservative Islamic government and most international election observers, however, rejected the notion.

Over the weekend, a former advisor to Ms. Bhutto's successor, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, and a member of his cabinet backed up her claims. "Naturally, this substantiates what we've said all along," said Ms. Bhutto, who staged a 12-hour hunger strike Sunday to protest what she said were government attempts to destroy her populist Pakistan People's Party.

"Now that cracks are appearing in the establishment, people are coming out and we feel vindicated," she said. "As time goes along, we'll see more and more saying the same thing."

In the past month, fissures

have appeared in the fragile Islamic Democratic Alliance. The party is beset by a rising crime wave that has stalled sweeping economic reforms and calls for its dismissal by former supporters.

On Sunday, Youth Affairs Minister Gohar Ali Shah said he had submitted his resignation to President Ghulam Ishaq Khan because the government's policies had failed in southern Sindh, the country's most lawless province and Ms. Bhutto's former stronghold. He did not know if the president had accepted it.

Shah, a member of one of the country's most powerful feudal families in Sindh, also acknowledged there was fraud in the Oct. 24, 1990 polls.

"There was rigging. Most people who didn't even know the A B Cs of politics were elected. How would you explain that?" he told The Associated Press.

Ishaq Khan used his constitutional powers on Aug. 6, 1990, to dismiss Ms. Bhutto's 20-month administration on charges of corruption, political ineptitude and abuse of power. Three months later, Ms.



ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto presents garlands to her colleagues staging a 12-hour hunger strike with her, in front of Pakistani Parliament August 4. The fast was carried out to demand the repeal of security laws and the ouster of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Bhutto's left-leaning party was relegated to a weak, largely ineffective opposition in Parliament. Naved Malik, a former advisor to Sharif, told reporters that he coordinated two 'election cells' set up to ma-

nipulate the election results and make sure Ms. Bhutto did not return to power.

At the time, Sharif was the chief minister of eastern Punjab, the country's wealthiest and most populous province that dominates Parliament.

"Call me whatever you can. I, too, was involved in the rigging exercise," said Malik, who has a reputation as a political opportunist. He is also believed to be the author of several letters purportedly written by Ms. Bhutto to try to depict her as a traitor, a Zionist and an American puppet.

Just before the balloting, Malik said, domestic intelligence agencies predicted that Ms. Bhutto's party would edge Sharif's Islamic Democratic Alliance and emerge as the single largest party.

Three days before the polling, Malik said, the election cells decided to limit Ms. Bhutto and the People's Party to only 45 seats in the law-making National Assembly, the lower house of parliament.

When the ballot counting started, he said, the results were switched.

Pak troops rescue New Zealand's aid worker

PESHAWAR, Aug 5: Pakistani paramilitary forces rescued an abducted New Zealand aid worker unharmed on his 45th birthday when they stormed the kidnappers' hideout today, reports Reuter.

Police firing tear gas and guns stormed a high walled compound in Pakistan's lawless tribal belt during the high to free United Nations Agronomist John Stevens and three Afghan colleagues.

Peshawar Commissioner Famin Jan Baber told reporters that Stevens was unharmed after his four-day ordeal at Chora village in the North West Frontier Province west of Peshawar.

I was not maltreated said Stevens, a consultant for the UN food and Agriculture Organisation. He declined to answer questions.

New Punjab Governor named

NEW DELHI, Aug 5: India named a former Punjab police chief today to replace Governor Om Prakash Malhotra, who quit to protest the 11th-hour postponement of elections in the state torn by Sikh separatist violence, reports AFP.

Surendra Nath, belongs to the elite Indian Police Service (IPS)

Off the Record

Imelda wants to be Corazon's pal

MANILA: Former first lady Imelda Marcos says she wants to be friends with President Corazon Aquino after she returns from exile in the United States, reports AP.

"I'll be by her side. I know the intense pain of suffering and humiliation," Mrs Marcos said in an interview taped in New York and broadcast here Sunday by ABS-CBN Television. "You can be sure that when I return home, I will be Mrs Aquino's friend."

Last Wednesday, the government lifted its entry ban against the family of the late President Ferdinand Marcos but said they would be tried for tax fraud if they come home from the United States.

The government refused to allow Mrs Marcos to bring home the body of the late president, who died in exile in Hawaii in September 1989.

Mrs Marcos has been evasive over whether she will return without her husband's body. Mrs Aquino was swept into office by the 'people power' revolt that ended Marcos' 20-year rule in 1986. She blames the Marcoses for the assassination of her husband, then opposition leader Benigno Aquino, on his return to the Philippines from exile in 1983.



Yoko Ono better ties with Beatles

KNOXVILLE (Tenn): Yoko Ono says her relationship with the surviving Beatles has improved since the group's breakup to the point that she considers them friends, reports AP.

"Sometimes they are friendly, sometimes they are not; sometimes one of them is friendly and sometimes one of them is not like all relationships with friends," Ono said in an interview published Sunday in the Knoxville News-Sentinel. "I think that's natural with friends."

Ono said her relationship with the late singer John Lennon created jealousy among the other members, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr. She was blamed for the band's breakup, but she said the pain of the split went both ways. "They hurt us and we hurt them," she said.

"Songwriters in this world are pretty harmless people. They're not doing anything like creating a nuclear bomb or trying to decide whether people should be killed. I have a lot of respect for them," said Ono.

She's tired of being compared with Shields

NASHVILLE (Tenn): Russian-born actress Mila Jovovich says she is tired of being compared to Brooke Shields, reports AP.

Jovovich, 15, is making her movie debut in "Return to the Blue Lagoon," a sequel to the movie that starred Shields and grossed more than \$100 million at the box office.

Jovovich, the daughter of a Russian actress mother and a Yugoslav doctor father, has four years of modeling behind her and has appeared on the covers of Mademoiselle, Seventeen and Elle magazines.

But the similarities between the actresses and there, Jovovich told the Tennesseean in an interview in Saturday's edition.

"She has her career and I have mine. I really don't see what we have in common," Jovovich said.

"Besides, it has been a very long time since she was my age," Jovovich said of the 26-year-old Shields.

Cheney defends rights of homosexuals

WASHINGTON: Defence Secretary Dick Cheney defended Sunday the right of homosexuals to work in civilian positions at the Pentagon, saying his staff's private lives were their own business, reports AP.

Homosexuality is grounds for dismissal in the uniformed services, but Cheney said, "I don't think there is anything fundamentally wrong for us to make a distinction between civilian and military services."

Asked on ABC television about a senior aide who had been identified as homosexual in a gay publication, Cheney said his policy over the years with respect to his personal staff was "that I don't ask them about their private lives."

"As long as they perform their professional responsibilities in a responsible manner, their private lives are their business."

"I would also argue that it's none of your business," he told ABC reporter Sam Donaldson.

The Cheney aide was not identified. Cheney said he had inherited a policy that specifically bans homosexuals in the uniformed services, which he said was "based upon the proposition that the gay lifestyle is incompatible with military service."

The advocate, a gay publication, has criticized the Pentagon for its policy toward homosexuals.



China blames West for juvenile delinquency

BEIJING, Aug 5: China blamed the west for juvenile delinquency today saying that pursuit of values such as freedom and democracy led to spiritual ruin, reports Reuter. The capitalist system itself is the warm bed of juvenile

delinquency, thundered a signed article in the Communist Party newspaper People's Daily. The unstinting rapacious pursuit of money and the collapse of social morality are the deep roots of juvenile crime.

Entitled the whole society comes together to care for and save the lost youth, the article was written by Kang Shien, 76, Head of the Chinese Committee.

Baker ends 23-day trip: Settlement not guaranteed

ME peace confce without PLO to fail: Arafat

ALGIERS, Aug 5: PLO leader Yasser Arafat held talks with the Algerian President on Sunday, 24 hours ahead of a visit by US Secretary of State James Baker aimed at seeking Algerian support to get Palestinians to a peace conference, reports Reuter.

Arafat, who has preceded Baker, now in Rabat, in visit to Morocco and Tunisia, repeated after his talks with President Chandli Benjedid that a conference without the PLO or Palestinian representatives

from Jerusalem would not be a real peace effort.

"The holding of a peace conference without participation of the PLO or of representatives of Al-Quds (Jerusalem) does not constitute in any case a real peace conference, but a 'Camp David B' to normalise Arab-Israeli relations," Arafat said.

The Camp David accords led to a bilateral Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979 but failed to bring peace to the Middle East.

Israel says it will not sit down with the Palestine Liberation Organisation which it terms a "terrorist group." It also opposes involvement of Palestinian delegates from Arab East Jerusalem fearing this will raise questions on its disputed claim to sovereignty over Jerusalem.

Arafat said: "We are disposed to accept more sacrifices and firmness through the pursuit of the Intifada (the 4-month-old Palestinian revolt in the occupied territories) un-

til victory if Israel persists in its intransigence."

The PLO leader said no agreement had been reached on sending a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation to a peace conference "but the question is still under examination at the level of the Algerian leadership," the Algerian news agency APS reported.

AP says: US Secretary of State James A Baker III is homeland bound after 23 days abroad, having brokered a Middle East peace conference likely to begin in October.

However, the goal of the conference — an Arab-Israeli settlement — is not guaranteed.

If Palestinian Arabs sign on, and they may have little choice but to accept, the peace conference will be convened, perhaps in a neutral European city such as Geneva.

As Baker met in Tunis on Sunday with Tunisian President Ben Ali, a senior adviser to Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat said "there is no obstacle which will be big enough to prevent the Palestinians from attending."

Arafat, however, took a hard-line stance when asked Sunday by Algerian radio what would happen if Israel insisted on conditions that were unacceptable to the PLO.

"The Palestinian revolution will continue, wave after wave, until the Palestinian flag flies on the walls, the minarets and the churches of the holy city of Jerusalem," he replied.

The question is whether the Palestinians will accept the deal Baker struck with Israel to exclude the participation of Palestinians with current ties to East Jerusalem.



JERUSALEM: Israeli peace activists demonstrate here August 4 against the settlements policy carried on by the Israeli government in the occupied territories. The government officially endorsed plans for Israel to participate in a Middle East peace conference.

Fighting in Cambodia, ceasefire flouted

HANOI, Aug 5: Phnom Penh government troops battled Khmer Rouge guerrillas for four hours to recover a dragon and five bronze bulls looted from a border village, Phnom Penh's SPK news agency said in a dispatch monitored here Monday, reports AP.

A force of 450 Khmer Rouge infiltrated the northwestern Commune of Prasat Pheah on July 27, seized the six antique bronze statues and took them to the Thai border,

the agency claimed. Government troops recovered the objects after a four-hour gun battle, SPK said, without mentioning casualties.

The same day, guerrillas lobbed 500 to 600 mortar and artillery rounds at government positions around Sway Chek, in northwest Cambodia's Banteay Meanchey province, despite a ceasefire agreement. SPK charged.

Phnom Penh has accused

the guerrillas of repeatedly violating the truce during the last week of July, including on July 23 when a clash in the north-west allegedly left 62 dead or wounded on the two sides.

The guerrilla coalition, which groups the powerful Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge with two non-communist factions, has leveled similar accusations at Phnom Penh's forces.

Sources who monitor

Cambodia from Thailand confirm that fighting has taken place, but they say it is not as heavy as before the ceasefire took effect May 1.

The four Cambodian factions, at war ever since Vietnam ousted the radical Marxist Khmer Rouge from power in January 1979 and installed the current Phnom Penh government, agree in late June to extend the truce indefinitely.

BRIEFLY

Queen Mother celebrates birthday:

Queen Mother Elizabeth quietly celebrated her 91st birthday Sunday with her daughter, the queen, at the royal Sandringham estate in Norfolk, eastern England, reports AP from Sandringham.

As the Queen Mother left the Sandringham parish church after morning service, the organist slipped a few bars of "Happy Birthday to You," into the processional, sending the small and smiling former queen out to waiting well-wishers with a flourish.

The church was packed with local residents and estate workers who joined the rector in wishing the Queen Mother "a very happy day." There was more applause as his words were broadcast to a crowd outside.

About a thousand people, many of them children with bouquets, waited in the sunshine outside to greet the Queen Mother, the widow of King George VI, who reigned during World War II.

Vietnam, China to hold talks on Cambodia:

The deputy foreign ministers of Vietnam and China will open talks this week in Beijing on the Cambodian peace process, the Voice of Vietnam radio announced Monday, AP from Bangkok says.

The talks Thursday will focus on efforts to end the long war in Cambodia between the Chinese-backed guerrillas and the Vietnamese-installed government in Phnom Penh, official Hanoi media also reported.

Hanoi will be sending Nguyen Dy Nien, a deputy foreign minister and ranking member of Vietnam's ruling Communist Party, the broadcast said. It did not identify his Chinese counterpart.

The meeting will be the fifth of deputy foreign ministers from both countries since January 1989.

The two countries have had little official contact since 1978, when Vietnam invaded Cambodia and ousted the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge. China responded to the invasion by engaging in border clashes with Vietnam.

China warns Fiji:

China warned Fiji Monday against expanding ties with Taiwan, but the Fijian Prime Minister has already dismissed Beijing's complaints as hypocrisy, Reuter from Beijing says.

Fiji must "refrain from developing official relations with Taiwan so as to ensure the smooth development of relations between China and Fiji," a foreign ministry spokesman said.

China regards nationalist-ruled Taiwan as a renegade province and insists foreign countries recognise "one China", with Beijing as its sole legitimate government.

Mandela blasts De Klerk:

A weary Nelson Mandela met with Brazil's only black governor on Sunday but cancelled some activities due to tiredness, reports AP from Rio De Janeiro.

The 73-year-old Mandela also gave an interview with a Brazilian newspaper in which he blasted the West for easing sanctions against South Africa and criticized the South African government for giving money to the Inkatha movement, a rival organization to Mandela's African National Congress.

"The suspension of sanctions and of other forms of pressure on the apartheid regime was tragically premature," he told the Journal do Brasil newspaper in an interview published Sunday. "We hope that all the countries that have modified their policies will review their decisions."

Mandela said F. W. de Klerk's National Party "puts in danger not only the peace process in South Africa but also similar processes in the region."

Saddam rehabilitates errant son, grooms him as successor

BAGHDAD, Aug 5: The blackened concrete walls of the Ameriya air raid shelter still carry the scent of smoke, reports AP.

The only light in the cavernous, ground-floor chamber of the shelter comes from the gaping hole in the roof where bombs crashed through in early February, incinerating hundreds of people who had sought refuge inside.

Rays of light illuminate the severed, gnarled steel bars that once reinforced the 10-foot (3-meter) thick concrete ceiling. A sheet of steel the lined the ceiling is peeled back in a giant curl.

Light shines on a 13-foot (4-meter) wide crater in the cement floor where the bombs continued their deadly path into the underground chambers.

As many as 200 people may still be buried in those

rooms. The Iraqi government says 394 victims were removed from the shelter, but residents of the surrounding neighbourhood say 600 people were in the shelter the night of the attack.

"Didn't those satellites see civilians were using it?" asked Taleb Abbas, who lives across the street from the shelter.

He said nine of his family members, including his brother's wife and children, were burned to death in the bombing.

The US military has said its aircraft bombed the shelter because it was used as a communications center by the Iraqi army.

Another report: When a new newspaper edited by Uday Hussein hit the streets of Baghdad a few months ago, Iraqis knew for sure what they had sensed for a while—that President Saddam Hussein had

finally rehabilitated the errant son he once accused of killing his bodyguard and whom he threatened to bring to public trial.

"Yet now that the newspaper-Babil-meaning Babylon-has settled into its niche in the controlled Baghdad Press as a supposed independent, some have come to wonder what kind of impact the President's son is planning to make in the ambiguous world of Iraqi journalism."

His comments, sometimes, jar with those Iraqis sensitive to what outsiders might think about them. The other day, for instance, the newspaper carried a long account of an address the President's son gave to journalism students here. When the students asked why he had called the newspaper Babil, he replied according to his newspaper, that for one thing "the Jews have a com-



Saddam plex about Babylon because it was built on their corpses."

The other reason, he said, was "that is a symbol of Iraqi civilisation."

The 28-year-old son has also printed poems of praise to his father, saying the President's concern for the nation is such that he "wipes the mucus from the noses of the children" — strange flattery even by Baghdad standards. And he has remonstrated with those who take issue with the security the surrounds himself

when, in his other capacity as chairman of the National Olympic Committee, he attends a soccer game.

At one recent match, an official here said, spectators went through five body searches to enter the park, and jeeps equipped with machine guns were stationed outside.

The fans' complaints about the intrusion, Babil said, were tantamount to hostility to the government itself. Perhaps more mystifying is the role Babil has started to play in the arcane politics of personality that surround Saddam. In one instance, the son took issue with a decision by the powerful defence minister, Hussein Kamal Majid-his brother-in-law to close down an officers' club.

Some foreign specialists pondered whether this was part of the dynastic manoeuvring that tailors the mantle of succession. Was the son staking a claim ahead of the in-

creasingly influential son-in-law? Were the motives yet murkier? Whatever, the sporting club reopened.

Similarly, the Babil editor took issue with Hamid Sayeed, the editor of the newspaper of the ruling Baath Party Aten Thawra, suggesting that he had written something that amounted to treason.

"For Iraqis reading between the lines," said a knowledgeable official, speaking privately "that meant bye-bye Hamid Sayeed." The saga of Uday Hussein's supposed fall and rehabilitation began in May 1989, when Saddam announced on television to a stunned nation that he was ordering his eldest son's trial on charges of murdering a trusted presidential bodyguard.

The son was said to have felled the man with an iron bar during a party on an island in the Tigris river that slices through Baghdad. Many Iraqis now believe that the son was

incensed with the bodyguard because he believed him to be acting as a mediator between his father and a woman, who he thought would become the President's second wife, thereby upsetting Uday's mother.

Uday was incarcerated in a place-then went briefly into exile Geneva. After an apparently spontaneous appeal by the bodyguard's father to have the charges dropped, the charges were dropped. Last year the son-the oldest of Saddam's five children-was reinstated as head of the National Olympic Committee.

In the Persian Gulf war, official newspapers reported him visiting frontline troops on three occasions, supposedly adding to his credentials. Such is the belief among many Iraqis in the weblike power of Saddam, his family and his associates, and such is the strength of rumour in the absence of fact the Uday is also

credited with controlling the market in meat supplies and owning the only functioning chicken farm in a society where food supplies are strangled by international sanctions.

Beyond the lies the sense that despite the Gulf war, the sanctions and the revolts among the Kurds of the north and the Shi'ite Muslims of the south, the president and his minority Sunni Muslim clansmen form the Tikrit area, north of Baghdad, are intent not only on maintaining their dominance but also on establishing a dynasty, rooted in family bond and intermarriage.

Saddam, according to diplomats in neighbouring Jordan once went so far as to propose that Uday Hussein marry a Jordanian princess to establish a blood tie between his secular and 'unpretentious forebears and the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan.

King Hussein of Jordan reportedly declined the offer.