

# Anura Bandaranaike quits politics

COLOMBO, Oct 11: Shri Lankan opposition politician Anura Bandaranaike, son of two former Prime Ministers and groomed as a future leader, quit politics today in disgust over party squabbles, a close aide said, reports Reuter.

"He sent a long letter to his mother (Sirima Bandaranaike), who is also President of the Shri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), saying he was resigning from the party and all other political positions," said the aide, a senior SLFP parliamentarian who did not want to be identified.

The party has been struggling a leadership crisis focused on the Bandaranaike family.

Bandaranaike, 44, and his mother were not immediately available for comment.

But an official confirmed the resignation and said Anura planned a statement later.

The aide said Bandaranaike had been toying with the idea of quitting the party and politics after a dispute with his mother.

He had been critical of her and the party leadership, resulting in his suspension from the party last July.

"He has been troubled by party squabbles and was disgusted with the situation," the aide said.

# Indian Muslims plan to open Islamic court

NEW DELHI, Oct 11: Indian Muslim theologians have decided to open religious courts — which will travel on wheels to remote rural areas — to settle Muslim disputes in accordance with the Islamic laws, reports AFP.

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board appealed to the country's 100-million Muslims on Sunday to refer all disputes to the courts and abide by their decisions, the Hindustan Times said today.

The Board's general secretary, Maulana Nizamuddin, told reporters at the end of a conference in the northern city of

Jaipur that the courts will allow Muslims to bypass time-consuming and expensive judicial processes.

He said the Islamic courts dispensing justice in accordance with the Sharia, or Islamic code, will be set up all over the country. Mobile courts will travel to rural areas.

Nizamuddin said the board would also launch a drive to educate Muslims on Islamic social and legal norms and to "enthuse them to inculcate these norms in their family and private life."

A special cell will be set up to educate Muslim women on

their rights and privileges under the religious law, he said.

The decision to establish Islamic courts comes in the wake of a dispute over the right of a Muslim husband to divorce his wife by telling her "Talaq, Talaq, Talaq."

A Muslim religious organisation sparked the dispute by ruling in May that "I divorce thee" uttered three times in a row would be tantamount to saying it just once, which is revocable under the Sharia.

The triple Talaq would be valid only if spaced out over three occasions and three months, it said in a ruling

seeking to prevent broken marriages resulting from the words spoken in anger or under intoxication.

At the conference in Jaipur attended by more than 100 theologians and religious scholars, delegates also decided to launch on December 3 a massive campaign for the reconstruction of the destroyed Babri Mosque in Ayodhya.

The 16th century Mosque, which was destroyed by Hindu zealots last December triggering riots across India, should be rebuilt at its original site, the conference demanded.

# Gamsakhurdia forces destroy TV tower

MOSCOW, Oct 11: Forces loyal to ousted Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia destroyed a television tower on Sunday, blocking out broadcasts over much of western Georgia, Itar-Tass news agency said, reports Reuter.

The attack blocked out transmissions to the whole of the Black Sea autonomous republic of Abkhazia, including the port of Batumi, the Guria region to the north of Abkhazia, and other regions of western Georgia," it said.

Gamsakhurdia urged thousands of supporters in his west-

ern stronghold of Zugdidi on Sunday to rise up and overthrow Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze's administration.

The rebellion is one of many troubles facing Shevardnadze, whose transcaucasian state has lurched from one crisis to another since Gamsakhurdia was ousted early in 1992.

Gamsakhurdia returned from exile last month to muster support in his ethnic homeland of Mingrelia at a time when Shevardnadze was preoccupied by a separatist conflict in the coastal region of Abkhazia.

# BRIEFLY

**Fergie arrives in Nepal:** The Duchess of York arrived in Nepal on Sunday to help a group of mentally handicapped British men climb a Himalayan mountain in a trek sponsored by a charity that encourages disabled people to live as independently as possible. AP reports from Kathmandu.

Pemba Gywitsen Sherpa, one of the many Sherpa guides who help visitors climb to the summit of towering Himalayan peaks, gave the Duchess a garland of marigolds and other flowers.

But reporters were not allowed near her, and diplomats said that was because she is on a "strictly private trip." She was greeted at the airport by British Ambassador Timothy G B George.

**German arrested in Iran:** Iranian authorities said Sunday they arrested a German man for having illegal ties with the military, a phrase commonly used to refer to spying. AP reports from Nicosia.

The Islamic Republic News Agency, monitored in Cyprus, identified the man as Gerhard Alfred Bechmann and said he was arrested Saturday. It gave no further information on Bechmann.

The agency quoted an announcement by the judiciary branch of the armed forces as saying he was held on suspicion of bribery, illegal ties with the military and assisting in the disclosure of military information.

**Rabbani in Saudi Arabia:** Afghanistan's President Burhanuddin Rabbani arrived in Saudi Arabia on Sunday to seek aid for thousands of people made homeless in months of fighting in Kabul, Reuter reports from Dubai.

The official Saudi press agency said King Fahd met Rabbani at Jeddah airport, but did not give any other details.

In Kabul, spokesman Abdul Aziz Morad said Rabbani would be asking Saudi Arabia for help for the homeless.

**Italian minister resigns:** Italian Industry Minister Paolo Savona resigned on Sunday after a public row over how the country's privatisation policy should be conducted, a statement from his ministry said, Reuter reports from Rome.

The Minister for Industry, Professor Savona, communicates that he has handed his resignation to Prime Minister (Carlo Azeglio Ciampi," the statement said.

**Floods claim 8 in Karnataka:** Torrential rains have triggered floods and demolished houses, killing eight people and stranding thousands in the Southern Indian state of Karnataka, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported Monday. AFP says from New Delhi.

The state government was carrying out rescue operations Monday with the help of helicopters in the districts of Raichur and Bijapur following two days of rain, the news agency said.

Thousands were left homeless as houses collapsed, it added.

**17 executed in China:** Seventeen criminals were executed in Jinan, the capital of China's Shandong province, late last month, the Shandong Legal News reported. AFP says from Beijing.

The mass execution took place September 25 just ahead of national day, when the communist authorities traditionally mete out death sentences to a batch of criminals in each province.

The criminals were convicted of murder, theft and rape, the newspaper said.

**Dutch paintings recovered:** Police have recovered five paintings by Dutch masters stolen in the Netherlands and worth between US \$1 million to US \$1.3 million (1.5 million and 2 million Australian dollars), AP reports from Perth.

The paintings included portraits of the Dutch royal family painted in the 1840s. They were recovered from a private home, but had sustained water damage and nail punctures from crude packaging.

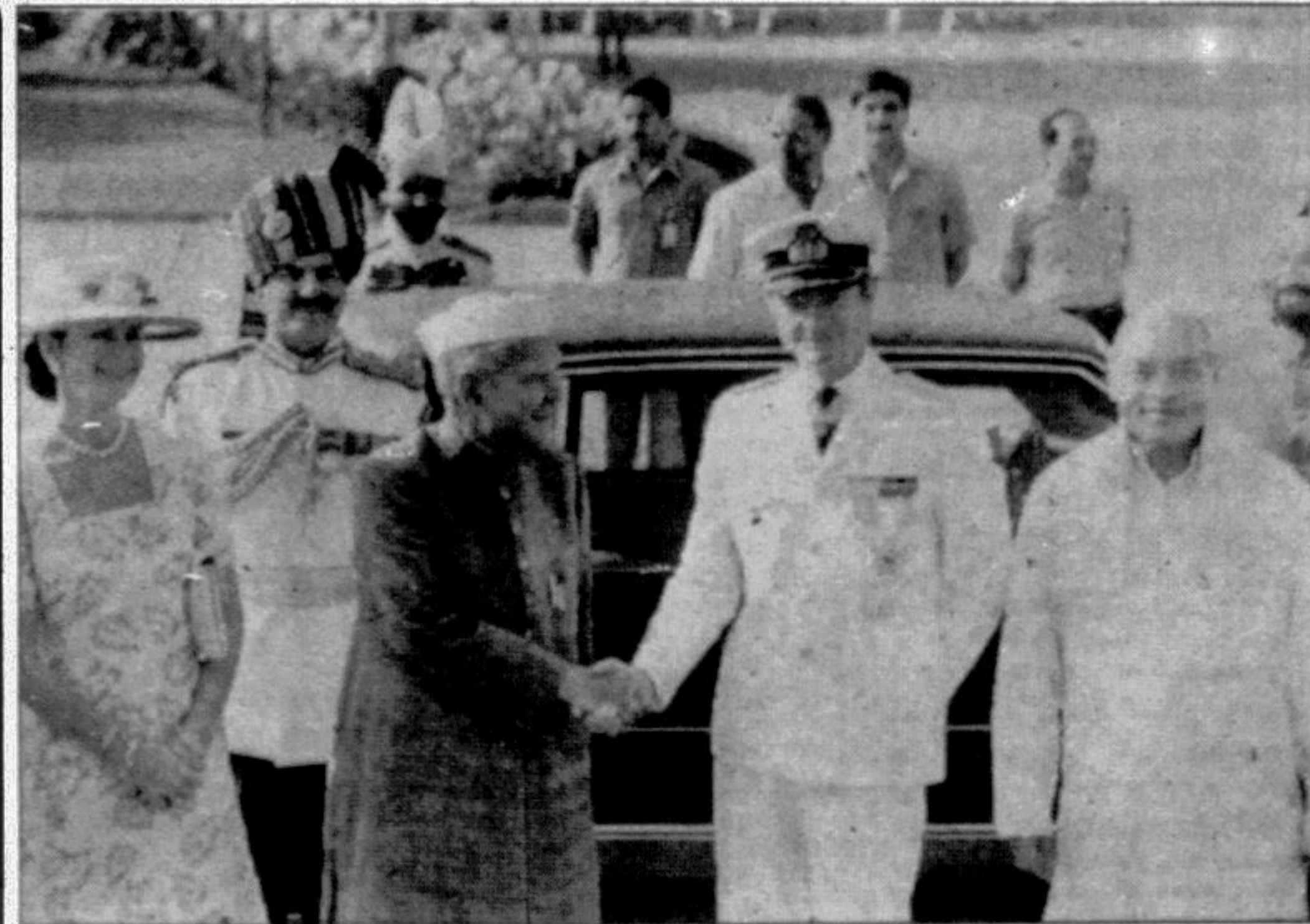
Two are portraits of Dutch royalty by Willem Schmidt; the best known portrait is of tobacco company founder Baron WA Schimmel Pennick, painted by Nicolaas Pieneman.

**5 Nicaraguan troops killed:** Five soldiers were killed and two soldiers and a civilian were injured when rearmend Contra rebels ambushed an army truck in central Nicaragua, an army spokesman said on Saturday, Reuter reports from Managua.

Army spokesman captain Rodrigo Espinoza told Reuters 30 to 40 so-called "Reconstru" attacked the vehicle on Friday afternoon in the area of Puertitas Negras, about 190 km (120 miles) northwest of Managua.

**Gold medal for Y'slav film:** Yugoslav feature film Bulevar Revolucije received a gold medal at the just concluded international film festival in Salerno, Italy, Tanjug-Pool reports from Belgrade.

"Bulevar Revolucije, directed by Vladimir Blazevski and produced by Cinema Design from Belgrade is a story of petty thieves, smugglers and the city's poor, living in the longest and most jammed street in Bel-grade, the Bulevar Revolucije."



King Karl Gustaf XVI and Queen Silvia of Sweden are greeted by India's President Shankar Dayal Sharma on Monday at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi where the royal couple began a week-long visit. From left are: Queen Silvia, President Sharma, King Karl Gustaf, Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao. — AFP photo

# Black Sea faces change

CONSTANTA, Romania, Oct 11: The bathing beaches are still there. But fish stocks are dwindling, chemical pollution is spreading and the Black Sea is losing its sun and water worshippers, reports AP.

All along its 2,500-mile (4,000-kilometer) coastline, fishing boats sit in port. Idled by the sharp drop in numbers of caviar-laden sturgeon, anchovy, sprat and mackerel.

The ancient link between Europe and Asia is suffering dramatic changes and biologists warn it could become an ecological graveyard by early next century.

The worry about the growing tide of human, farm and industrial effluent pouring in from the six Black Sea countries — Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia and Georgia —

that use the almost landlocked sea as a dump and sewer.

"Ecologically, the Black Sea is in an extremely critical situation. It could become dead in 10 or 15 years if nothing is done to rescue it," said Simion Nicolaev, director of the Romanian Marine Research Institute in Constanta.

The situation led to the signing last year of a plan "for protecting the sea with a cooperative effort that will include environmental scientists from the former Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and the United States. The World Bank has promised assistance beginning in 1994.

Dozens of rivers and streams deliver waste from a catchment area of 162 million people in 11 countries, spanning much of

Europe. Among the biggest and most polluted are the Dniester, the Dniester and the Bug flowing through Ukraine, and the Danube, acting like a huge trade artery for the Balkan countries. They carry tons of toxic materials - hydrocarbons, organic matter, detergents pesticides, heavy metals.

For bathing lovers all this is bad news.

Swimming at Istanbul beaches in Turkey has been declared health hazard, because of dangerous concentrations of coliform bacteria from human and animal waste coming from untreated sewage emptying into the sea. Beaches near Odessa, Ukraine, have been closed in recent summers because of toxicity and the smelly forth of algae.

# Lankan police on alert

COLOMBO, Oct 11: Police are on alert after intelligence reports said a bomb discovered in the city was to be used by Tamil rebels for attacks, officials said Monday, reports AP.

A teenager strolling on Modera beach near the city Thursday found an aluminum case containing 3.5 kilograms (8 pounds) of RDX explosives sewn on to a pair of denim shorts.

Police fear the rebels were targeting a senior politician or a military chief, but were unable to identify the likely victim.

"We are taking necessary precautions because we do not know when and where it will happen," said police officer Jitha Jayasuriya.

At least 58 suspected Tamil rebels have been taken into custody and are being questioned, police said.

The government has offered a 10,416 dollar (500,000 rupee) reward for information relating to the bomb, police said.

Tamil Tiger rebels have used similar explosive devices to assassinate politicians and officials.

# Plot to leave Diana out of royal stage

LONDON, Oct 11: Buckingham Palace officials have hatched a plot to freeze out Princess Diana from the royal stage, Britain's Today newspaper reported today, says Reuter.

The tabloid carried a two-page investigative article by its royal correspondents declaring that "something sinister is happening, a plot of epic proportions whose purpose is to rewrite history and expunge forever the role of Diana."

Diana separated from Prince Charles last December after 11 years of marriage, plunging the British monarchy into its worst crisis since the abdication of King Edward VIII in 1936 and putting Charles's future accession to the throne in doubt.

"For 13 years she was the most photographed person in the world," said Today.

"Now the world is seeing less and less of her, because grey men in the back rooms of Buckingham palace are succeeding in their attempts to draw her into the shadows."

"A recent official list of engagements made it appear that Diana, since her separation from Prince Charles, had opted for the easy life."

Today said those closest to the 32-year-old Princess knew this was nonsense.

The plot involved Diana's path being blocked wherever she turned, said the newspaper.

"The most shocking example of this came last Friday when Diana was snubbed by the Queen and left out of official pictures at the wedding of Viscount Linley and Serena Stanhope."

Another tabloid, The Daily Mirror, carried a front-page picture of a weary looking Diana under the headline, "Is the strain getting to Di?"

"Diana, looking angry and strained, drew Wills (William) and Harry to her side and quickly walked up the theatre steps," said the Mirror.



PLO Chief Yasser Arafat (L) and Vice President of the National Palestinian Council Selim Za'anoun stand up at the opening of the three-day council meeting Sunday in Tunisia. Opponents of the autonomy accord with Israel lobbied members of the PLO's mini-parliament in exile not to ratify the deal. — AFP photo

# 140 fake police held in China

BEIJING, Oct 11: Authorities in one Chinese province have arrested more than 140 people for impersonating police officers to rob and rape, the official Xinmin Evening News said, reports AP.

Nor is Shanxi province in northern China the only place with a fake police problem. A ready availability of police uniforms and insignia on the open market has led to a nationwide crime wave by crooks in police uniforms, this and other recent news reports have said.

The Sunday edition of the Xinmin Evening News of Shanghai, seen in Beijing on Monday, said Shanxi police shut down more than 280 places that were selling police uniforms and insignia and seized thousands of uniforms.

# Muslim extremists' battle with Arab rulers not the West

NEW YORK, Oct 11: With the bombing of the World Trade Centre last spring, reports of planned terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists elsewhere in the city and western writers earmarked by Mullahs for death, it is easy to view the Islamic world as being locked in battle with the West, reports IPS.

But contrary to the spin-Arab governments put on the issue, the Islamic threat does not come primarily from foreign countries.

Although extremist groups will continue to go after western targets, the real battle now raging is between the Islamic militants and the regimes ruling the Arab world.

The image of a monolithic Islamic force emanating from states such as Iran or Sudan may be a comforting one for those who want to avoid the real reasons for the growth of these movements. It is, however, far from the truth.

Iran and Sudan are supportive of militant Islamic groups, but the real challenge to some Arab rulers comes from within their own societies, born of the miserable record of state failure in the Middle East.

And across the region, Arab states are resorting to increasingly violent and repressive mea-

asures to combat the growing challenge of the Islamists — with little success.

Algeria has been in a state of virtual civil war ever since the ill-fated December 1991 parliamentary elections were cancelled after it became clear the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) would win by a landslide.

In Egypt, an 18-month campaign by radical Islamic groups to undermine the government has led to thousands of arrests, an unprecedented number of executions by the state, hundreds of deaths and a decimated tourism industry.

Even in tiny Tunisia, a government crackdown on its banned Islamic movement, the Nahdha Party, has resulted in the arrests of some 8,000 individuals.

The Islamists are also on the ascendancy among the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. And while less militant than their brethren elsewhere, they are increasing in strength in Jordan as well.

That there has not been similar growth in Syria has much to do with Damascus's wipe-out of its Islamic opposition in Hama and other

cities that left some 20,000 people dead.

And in the lone experiment with democratization on the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen too has demonstrated the growing strength of the Islamists when given a chance to compete at the polls.

In all these states, the acute economic distress of the masses has undeniably fueled the growth of the Islamic opposition. Grinding poverty and relentless unemployment, endemic in most Arab countries, has created fertile ground for the radicals. But the issue is not just of being poor.

Increasingly, these states are perceived by their own citizens as politically and morally bankrupt — a change that has ripped through Arab states rich and poor alike.

State bureaucrats are not only seen as unable to cope with the growing needs of their burgeoning populations; they are seen as unwilling and disinterested concerned only with their own enrichment while society at large suffers.

Indeed, the Islamists usually position themselves not so much as a force that will end poverty as one that will end the pervasive greed

and corruption that has benefited only the few.

In a sense, the Islamic opposition movement can be seen as the flip side of democratization: both represent a desire for greater accountability — if not to the people then to God.

Saudi Arabia is a case in point rich and with a cradle-to-grave social welfare system for its citizens, the kingdom has nonetheless also seen the steady rise of militant Islamic opposition to the ruling family.

Fueled not only by economic failure, but by ossified political structures that have allowed corrupt and authoritarian rule to persist, the Islamists have successfully positioned themselves as the voice of the forgotten and oppressed.

Without addressing these root causes, the outlook for many of these states is questionable at best.

And while the West may continue to worry about terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists, the real focus of concern should be on the vulnerability inherent in basing key strategic and economic relationships on states whose future is so clouded with uncertainty.

# Australian charged with Nazi war crimes pleads not guilty

ADELAIDE, Oct 11: The third and almost certainly last Australian charged with Nazi war crimes pleaded not guilty on Monday in a South Australian court, reports Reuter.

Heinrich Wagner, 69, is charged with being involved in the murder of about 104 Jews and 19 children near the Ukrainian village of Izyaslavka during German occupation in 1942.

Wagner entered his plea on the first day of a preliminary hearing in the South Australian Supreme Court in Adelaide. His trial will begin immediately after the preliminary hearing, which is discussing legal points, a court official said.