

BRIEFLY



Abdala Bucaram, the newly-elected president of Ecuador, waves to the Ecuador Congress after his inauguration ceremony Saturday in Quito. Bucaram will serve a four-year term. — AFP/UNB photo

National Confce to take part in Kashmir polls

SRINAGAR, India, Aug 11: Kashmir's main Muslim party will take part in state legislative elections scheduled for next month in the strife-hit Indian state, a party leader said today, reports AFP. The pro-India National Conference, which said earlier it would stay away from the polls, changed its mind following a two-day leadership meeting here that concluded today, said the leader on condition of anonymity. State legislative elections will be held on September 7, 16, 21 and 30 in Kashmir. India's only Muslim-majority province, amid a boycott call by Muslim separatists. The last such elections were held in March 1987. Kashmir, where a bloody Muslim separatist campaign has claimed more than 12,000 lives since 1989, has been governed directly by New Delhi since January 1990. The pro-India National Conference ruled Kashmir from 1987 to 1990.

Pro govt rally for crackdown on Jakarta rioters

JAKARTA, Aug 11: Thousands of government supporters took part in a rally Sunday where speakers called on President Suharto and the military to punish anyone responsible for last month's riot, reports AP. Organisers said the gathering was a response to rallies held outside the headquarters of pro-democracy leader Megawati Sukarnoputri before a raid by security forces July 27 that sparked violent protests. Top military figures attended the hour-long rally Sunday morning outside a stadium near the Jakarta Police Command. The crowd was filled with the yellow shirts of Suharto's ruling Golkar Party and uniforms of about 50 other groups, most linked to Golkar. Organisers said 50,000 people attended, but the number appeared to be closer to half that figure.

3 Arabs taken to hospital after being tortured in PLO jail

JERUSALEM, Aug 11: Three Arabs were taken to hospital in the West Bank on Saturday after being tortured in a PLO jail, Palestinian human rights lawyer Hosni Kalbouni said, reports Reuter. In Gaza a Hamas leader called for the resumption of dialogue between the militant Islamic group and the Palestinian authority. Hours later, in an apparently unrelated development, 13 Hamas prisoners were released from a PLO jail. Kalbouni said the three Arabs were taken to the same hospital where another detainee was admitted two days ago. All four were resident of the West Bank town of Tulkarm.

TWA flight blast Two more bodies recovered

HAMPTON BAYS, New York, Aug 11: Salvagers brought the second of TWA Flight 800's four engines to shore Saturday and said they have recovered the remains of two more victims, bringing the total to 198 of the 230 who perished, reports AP. The latest remains were retrieved late Friday and Saturday, only days after National Transportation Safety Board Vice Chairman Robert Francis said the chances of finding more bodies was "increasingly unlikely". The second engine — found a day after the first — was brought by barge to Shinnecock Inlet on Saturday. A mangled piece of cowling with a pylon — a strut that holds the engine on the wing — was among the identifiable parts unloaded. The first engine dredged up from the ocean floor was taken late Friday to a nearby hangar where the plane is being re-assembled. A third engine has been located underwater.

Floods kill 41 in Mongolia:

More than 23,000 Rwandan refugees return: More than 23,000 Rwandan refugees have returned home this month, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in Rwanda on Saturday, AFP reports from Musange, Rwanda. In the first seven days of August, only 8,400 refugees had returned home, but then 8,600 made the trek on Thursday alone. On Friday, the figure was 6,148 despite Rwanda's closure of the border between the two countries the UN refugee agency said. **Floods kill 41 in Mongolia:** Flooding across Mongolia has killed 41 people and 1,800 cattle since June, Xinhua reported yesterday. AFP reports from Beijing. The latest death toll came from the capital, Ulan Bator, where torrential rains caused the Tuul and Selbe rivers to breach their banks overflow on Thursday evening. Six people were killed, according to local press reports. The remaining 35 deaths were caused in 12 floods in other regions of the nation.

Gunmen kill 5 in South Africa:

Gunmen attacked a tavern in the Sebokeng township south of Johannesburg Saturday, killing five men and seriously wounding three other people police said, AFP reports from Johannesburg. The three men armed with handguns opened fire on lunchtime patrons at the Kwagams Beer Hall before fleeing the scene, police spokesman Govindsamy Mariemuthoo told the Sapa news agency. **11 more executed in China:** Eleven convicted murderers and robbers have been executed in Beijing, the capital's evening newspaper reported, AFP says from Beijing. The 11, comprising six peasants, five unemployed and one hotel employee were executed Saturday, under the "strike hard" campaign against rising crime levels, the Beijing Evening News said. More than 1,400 people have been executed in China since the launch of the campaign at the end of April. **Quake shakes Japanese island:** An earthquake estimated at 6.0 on the Richter scale struck Japan's main island of Honshu yesterday, Hong Kong's Royal Observatory said, Reuter reports from Hong Kong. The observatory said the earthquake was recorded at 2.18 am (1818 GMT) and the epicentre was initially determined to be over eastern Honshu about 370 km (about 230 miles) north-northeast of Tokyo at 38.9 degrees north 140.6 degrees east. It gave no further details. **Taiwanese jet crashes:** A Taiwanese Air Force F-104 jet fighter crashed into the sea off the island yesterday but the pilot was safe, an air force spokesman said, Reuter reports from Taipei. The fighter was on a training flight when it apparently developed mechanical trouble and crashed, the spokesman said. The pilot is safe and we are investigating the cause of the crash," the spokesman added.

Opposition predicts collapse of Deve Gowda's govt

NEW DELHI, Aug 11: India's opposition is predicting a collapse of Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda's minority government as it hops from one crisis to another ahead of a crucial state election that could seal its fate, reports AFP. The latest convulsion to hit the ruling United Front is a threat by one of its major partners to pull out of the two-month-old coalition government if its regional interests are harmed. The warning by the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) has been taken seriously by Deve Gowda's Janata Dal (People's Party), with the 63-year-old prime minister acting quickly to prevent further damage. But even before the issue could be settled, the ruling alliance has come under flak from India's two communist parties, including one in the government, over its plans to sell off shares in public sector companies. The communists have

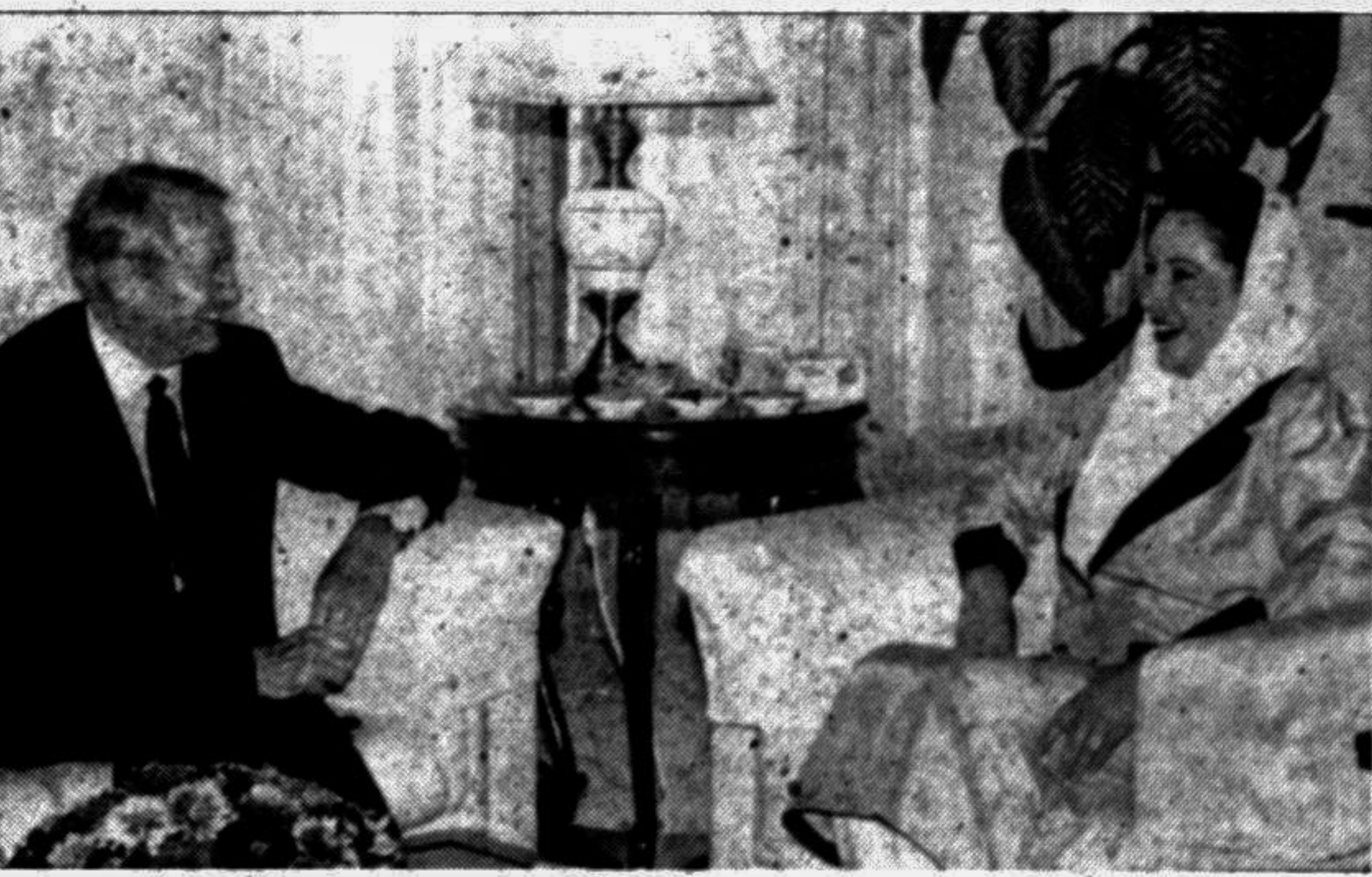
charged Deve Gowda with violating the United Front's Common Minimum Programme (CMP), a consensus document of the 13 parties that are in the grand alliance — although only six are directly represented in the government. Deve Gowda also faces the risk of a parting of ways with Defence Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav's Socialist Party over crucial legislative elections in the populous northern state of Uttar Pradesh in October. The opposition is predictably hoping the United Front will crack up. The country is bound to have general elections early next year if not earlier, said Jana Krishnamurthy of the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party). The parties which constitute the United Front lack commonality, he told AFP. They have no common ap-

proach except the so-called common programme. It is not enough to bind them together. The smaller but influential Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP, majority people's party), which champions the cause of millions of Hindu "untouchables" has also predicted an early exit of Deve Gowda. The love-hate relationship within the United Front constituents has made the government fragile and its fall appears imminent, BSP President Kanshi Ram warned Friday. Ram's outburst has embarrassed Deve Gowda, who is trying to join hands with the BSP and the Congress (I) Party of former premier PV Narasimha Rao to take on the Hindu-nationalist BJP in the upcoming Uttar Pradesh polls. The United Front was formed hastily after the April-May general elections produced a hung parliament with the BJP forming a government

Anti-tax strike draws mixed response on 2nd day in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Aug 11: An anti-tax strike by traders closed shops in Lahore and Rawalpindi but drew a mixed response elsewhere on its second day today, a normal working day in Islamic Pakistan, witnesses said, reports Reuter. Most shops and businesses in Lahore the capital of Punjab province, and Rawalpindi were shut for a second day running, but the strike was only partially observed in Karachi and Peshawar. Only tea-shops, bakeries and restaurants stayed open in Rawalpindi, near the capital Islamabad, but public transport was running normally, residents said. Witnesses in Karachi said buses and taxis were plying, many shops were open and morning traffic was jamming the streets of the southern city. Port activity was unaffected. Spokesmen for Karachi's

industrial areas of Korangi, Landhi and Site had no reports of absenteeism. Labour and staff had no problem reaching the factories as the traffic is normal, the Site spokesman said. In the northwestern city of Peshawar, the main Saddar Bazaar was shut, but some shops and markets in other areas were open. And in Islamabad it was business as usual for banks, commercial establishments and most shops, witnesses said. Small traders called the strike to vent their anger at the imposition of general sales tax in the 1995-97 (July-June) budget announced in June. V A Jaffery, the prime minister's special adviser on finance, has suggested that critics of sales tax are upset because it forces them to enter the documented economy, making tax evasion more difficult.



Visiting US Senator Hank Brown meets with Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in Islamabad on Saturday. They discussed India-Pakistan Kashmir dispute and the conflict in Afghanistan. — AFP/UNB photo

Tamil refugees may get relief Lankan navy destroys 2 LTTE boats

COLOMBO, Aug 11: Naval gunboats destroyed two Tamil rebel boats, killing between four to six guerillas in a skirmish in northeastern Sri Lanka, military officials said Sunday, reports AP. One sailor was injured in the attack when naval gunboats on patrol confronted nine rebel boats off the Mullaitivu coast on Saturday, officials said. The other seven rebel boats escaped. In a separate incident Saturday in eastern Ampara district, one Sinhalese civilian was killed and two more injured when rebels threw a hand grenade at a home after attempting to attack a police post in the region, officials said. In northern Sri Lanka, the military continued to consolidate positions and mass troops

Sunday for the final push into the rebel stronghold of Kilinochchi which has been under siege for 16 days, officials said. Over the past five days, both sides have brought in new troops to replace the dead and wounded and stockpiled ammunition, said the officials, speaking on condition of anonymity. Reuter adds: About 200,000 Tamil refugees, desperate for food after more than two weeks without fresh supplies as Sri Lankan troops push into rebel-held territory, may get relief on Monday, military officials said. "If everything is all right we'll be sending the food convoys tomorrow, an army official in the frontline town of Vavuniya, 215 km (135 miles) north of the capital said today.

Hawala scandal Indian passport of Amir Bhai cancelled

NEW DELHI, August 11: The Indian government has cancelled the Indian passport of Amir Bhai, a key-suspect in the \$18 million-US dollar Hawala bribery scandal to secure his return to India, the Sunday Times reported today, says Xinhua. The Indian government move came after a Hong Kong court had earlier rejected an Indian request for extradition of the suspect and was designed to pursue the suspect's deportation by the Hong Kong authorities. Bhai was released by the Hong Kong Court on Thursday when the court rejected the extradition plea because of lack of compelling evidence provided by the Indian authorities. Hawala is an illegal foreign exchange trade network by-passing India's official foreign exchange regime.

Off the Record

Another tale of Charles' romance
LONDON A Welsh woman now living in Canada, told a British Sunday paper that she enjoyed a two-year romance with Prince Charles before he met Princess Diana, reports AFP. Janet Jenkins, 51, the daughter of a doctor who emigrated to Canada from Cardiff said she first met the Prince of Wales in 1975 at a party in the British consulate in Montreal where she worked as a press assistant. Prince Charles has tremendous magnetism. The first time I met him, there was a connexion, a physical attraction. I was absolutely besotted. I thought he was the most charming man I had ever met," Jenkins told The Mail Today. But after two years of secret meetings, the two were spotted and photographed by reporters, while staying at the royal family's country home in Balmoral. The three days she had spent with the prince became the subject of intensive press speculation though her own name was never cited. The Mail Today said. Queen Elizabeth II, who was furious — telephoned to Charles and ordered him to return to London. A few months later, the prince put an end to the relationship. "Charles came under extreme pressure to marry. He smuggled me to Buckingham Palace to tell me that our relationship had to change. It was his duty," Jenkins was quoted as saying. Jenkins said she had remained on friendly terms with Charles and was even invited to his 40th birthday, in his wife's presence. I kissed and hugged Charles when arrived and she obviously didn't like that, Jenkins said alluding to the princess.

Fergie wins ban on 'Frank and Shocking' book
LONDON: The Duchess of York won a temporary ban on a "frank and shocking" book about her relationship with her former financial adviser, a newspaper reported Saturday, reports AP. The author Dr Allan Starkie, was a business partner of John Bryan, who is more famous for sucking the duchess's toes during a Riviera vacation than for his financial advice. The duchess, familiarly known as Fergie, is reported to be millions of pound (dollars) in debt, and Bryan was declared bankrupt on Tuesday in a dispute over money from magazine sales of wedding photographs of the duchess's sister. Starkie, however, appears likely to prosper from sales of his book, "Fergie: Her Secret Life," if it ever hits the bookstores. Publisher Michael O'Mara did not announce a money figure for the deal, but described the book as "an explosive account of every element of the relationship between the duchess and John Bryan." At a brief court hearing in London on Friday, lawyers for the duchess won a temporary injunction preventing Starkie and the publishers from communicating any information acquired during Starkie's association with the duchess. The Daily Telegraph reported. The injunction bars Starkie from disclosing any personal, financial or other confidential information about the duchess or other royal family members which might have been gained through Bryan, the newspaper says.

Israeli obstacles to making peace Arafat, Mubarak discuss ways to face

CAIRO, Aug 11: Yasser Arafat and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak discussed ways Saturday to face new Israeli obstacles to making peace with Palestinians, reports AP. Both leaders are upset by Israel's decision to expand Jewish settlements in the West Bank and to refuse to reopen peace talks until Palestinian offices in Jerusalem are shut, said Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa. Moussa described the plan to expand settlements as a grave danger to the peace process. Asked how the leaders would deal with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's demand Friday that Palestinians close offices in Jerusalem, Moussa replied, "Not in a positive way." Neither Arafat nor Mubarak made statements after the meeting. Moussa said the two leaders agreed to continue meetings between themselves and with

other Arab leaders to restart the Israeli-Palestinian talks as soon as possible. In the past week, Mubarak has met with Syrian President Hafez Assad and Saudi Arabia's King Fahd to plan an Arab strategy to counter Netanyahu's hard-line policies. Arafat also met Wednesday with King Hussein of Jordan. Before the PLO leader opened a session Saturday night with the central committee of his Fatah movement, member Intisar al-Wazir said she hoped the outside world would help make Israel live up to past agreements. "We will demand increasing the political pressure from all Arab and international parties to force Israel to implement all the agreements," said al-Wazir. Palestinian sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said several committee members were disappointed that Arab countries were not backing the Palestinians more strongly.



US Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole (R) and his newly-selected running mate Jack Kemp (L) shake hands with the crowd after a rally in downtown Russell, Kansas, Saturday. Dole introduced Kemp as his running mate at the rally in Dole's hometown. — AFP/UNB photo

Rao's scandal case can help decide his political future

NEW DELHI, Aug 11: India's Supreme Court takes up a case this week that could help decide former prime minister P V Narasimha Rao's political future and rock the nation's new coalition government, reports Reuter. The court is set to begin a hearing on Monday on Rao's appeal against a lower court summons to testify as a co-accused in a case of cheating an expatriate Indian businessman of 100,000 dollars. Last month Rao, 75, lost an appeal in the Delhi High Court, which rejected his plea saying the lower court had enough evidence to suspect his complicity in the case. Analysts say the Supreme Court's decision could have a

decisive impact on Rao's faltering efforts to retain leadership of the squabbling Congress party. The party, which has ruled India for all but four years since independence from Britain in 1947, suffered its worst ever defeat in April-May general elections. But Congress is still the second largest party in parliament, and its support is crucial to Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda's Centre-Left, 13-party coalition government. A Supreme Court ruling ordering Rao to testify could embolden his Congress rivals and cast a shadow over Deve Gowda's future, analysts say. "As the (Congress) party's support is critical to the survival of the United Front gov-

ernment, any upheavals in the Congress — like Rao stepping down on his own or under pressure from dissidents — could upset the delicate equation at the centre," India Today magazine said. Officially Congress says the leadership issue is not open. But many party members who are licking their wounds after the humiliating electoral defeat privately say they are convinced it will fare better without the wily Rao as its leader. Many Congress members oppose Rao's decision to support the government from outside and want to be part of Deve Gowda's ministry. But a strengthened Congress unhindered by Rao's multiplying legal woes could eventually pose a challenge to Deve Gowda, analysts say.

The case involves an expatriate Indian who says he paid 100,000 dollars in 1983 to a controversial Hindu holy man, who knows Rao, in a failed attempt to win a state contract. Rao has been embroiled in the case because the businessman, Lakubhai Pathak, says Rao, then foreign minister, assured him at a meeting in New York that his "work would be done." Rao has denied he was in New York on the dates mentioned by Pathak. But the charge against Rao of conspiring to cheat Pathak, 71, has tarnished the image of the man who led India through half a decade of economic reforms. The Central Bureau of In-

vestigation, India's federal police, which Rao once controlled, says it backs the summons. The embattled former prime minister's five-year tenure was dogged by scandals, including a bribery-for-favours scandal that erupted in January and forced seven ministers to resign from Rao's government. The Delhi High Court is hearing a case in which lawmakers from a regional party allege they were paid 100,000 dollars to vote against a 1993 no-confidence motion which Rao's government survived by a water-thin margin. In the past Rao weathered a sugar scandal, a row over telephone privatisation and India's biggest financial scandal.