

## CBI interrogates Rao about bribery scam

NEW DELHI, Sept 5: Federal police for the first time interrogated former Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao about allegations that he bribed lawmakers to win support for his government, a newspaper reported Thursday, says AP.

Rao denied the allegations that he ordered his Congress Party to pay off four opposition lawmakers to support his minority government in a confidence vote three years ago. The Hindustan Times newspaper reported quoting unnamed federal police officers.

If proved true, the case would further damage the reputation of the former government, which was mired in scandals through much of its five-year term, but which had never-

touched the prime minister himself.

Independent confirmation of the newspaper report was not immediately possible. Police officials and Rao were not available for comment.

On Wednesday, officials of the Central Bureau of Investigation asked Rao 15 to 20 questions about his alleged involvement in the bribery scam, it said. The newspaper quoted unnamed CBI officials as saying the questioning was a formality and they had reached no conclusions.

The case stems from accusations in a public interest lawsuit by a social activist that Rao was involved in payments of 30 million rupees (\$57,000 dollars).

## BJP to help eliminate Kashmiri militants

JAMMU, Sept 5: India's main opposition party said Wednesday it would give a free hand to Indian security troops to help them "eliminate" Kashmiri militants if elected to power in the state elections beginning Saturday, reports AFP.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian People's Party) said in its poll manifesto it would also take "Stern Action" against arms smugglers, while offering rehabilitation to victims of the guerrilla warfare raging in the state.

"We will declare Kashmir Valley and other militancy-affected areas as disturbed and give a free hand to army and paramilitary forces to eliminate gun-wielding militants," Dutt said.

BJP's state president Vaid Vishnu Dutt said.

More than 15,000 people have been killed in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, since 1989.

"We will also take stern action against arms smugglers and rehabilitate victims of militancy in Kashmir," Dutt said.

Thousands of people have fled the Himalayan province to neighbouring Indian states since 1989.

Dutt said the BJP would also set up a separate regional council with "full political, economic and administrative powers." In line with the demands of various local political leaders.

Two Iraqi MIG-29s also apparently tried to "lock on" to US jets conducting a routine patrol, but turned away as they neared the 33rd parallel, the northern border of the expanded no-fly

## Objectives for US mission in Iraq achieved: Clinton

WASHINGTON, Sept 5: President Clinton declared that airstrikes against Iraq have left Saddam Hussein strategically worse off, but Iraqi forces still challenged US patrols in the newly expanded "no-fly" zone over southern Iraq, reports AP.

Clinton, speaking with reporters in the Oval Office on Wednesday, declared a success for the twin US missile strikes against Iraqi air defence sites sparked by Iraqi attacks on a Kurdish faction in the north of Baghdad, where a defiant Saddam ordered his armed forces to shoot down any foreign aircraft.

Clinton said US objectives are limited "but our interests are clear: To demonstrate once again that reckless acts have consequences, to reduce Saddam's ability to strike out again at his neighbours, to increase America's ability to prevent future acts of violence and aggression."

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