

International  
Top Indian politicians say

Gowda govt may collapse soon

NEW DELHI, Dec 18: India's minority government may soon collapse after six months constantly walking a political tightrope, top politicians say, reports AFP.

Fears of an imminent collapse for Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda's centre-left United Front government have already caused gloom in business circles and pushed down stock prices.

Deve Gowda, heading a precarious seven-party coalition propped up by an increasingly hostile Congress (I) Party, insists that there is nothing to worry about.

It is a claim which has few takers.

Lal Krishna Advani, president of the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), (Indian People's Party), said that India may see early parliamentary elections next year.

The Hindu nationalist politician said both the United Front and the Congress were trying to break each other, despite a public spectacle of unity which he warned would not last

long. Even the congress, which propped up the government in June after helping it oust a short-lived BJP government, has begun to take a hard line against the United Front.

"This government will not last its five years of that much we are certain," Congress spokesman Vithal Gadgil told AFP.

"It could fall under the weight of its own contradictions or we could withdraw our support to it," he said. "These are two scenarios we visualise."

The government would fall without Congress support, although it also depends on half-a-dozen other parties.

Gadgil said his party was not happy with Deve Gowda. "He is keeping the pack together and surviving. If that is a test, then he has succeeded," the spokesman said. "But we are not all that happy with his overall performance."

Gadgil's comments came after a Congress colleague railed against the government.

"Ninety-nine per cent of the country's Congressmen feel that

for the future, for true relevance and viability of the Congress we must withdraw our support," said Jagannath Mishra.

Growing disenchantment with the United Front in the Congress and BJP is compounded by growing fissures with the coalition, whose members range from free-market enthusiasts to anti-reform Communists.

On Tuesday, a Communist leader said the government may not survive beyond six months.

"The way things are going it will be great if it lasts that long," the leader said on condition of anonymity. "We are unhappy — I think everyone is unhappy."

It's the first time Communists have joined a government in New Delhi since India's independence in 1947. In recent months they have been very critical of government policies.

One regional party from the southern state of Andhra Pradesh that is a part of the coalition is at loggerheads with the prime minister over the

construction of a dam in the region.

Home Minister Indrajit Gupta, a Communist, complains he is ignored on major issues by Deve Gowda. A minister warned Sunday the government would hike petroleum prices. This was denied by another minister the next day.

What kind of stability can you expect in such a situation? asked Advani of the BJP, the largest single group in the 545 seat parliament.

Deve Gowda's problems have increased since Sitararam Kesri became president of the Congress in September, replacing the scandal ridden former premier PV Narasimha Rao.

Kesri is desperately wooing some breakaway factions of the Congress, which had joined the United Front due to their dislike for Rao.

Two small breakaway factions supporting the United Front have rejoined the Congress. But as neither had cabinet ministers among them, the change did not affect the government.



Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences president Arthur Hiller displays the Oscar statuette won in 1934 by Clark Gable for "It Happened One Night" during a press conference in Beverly Hills. Hiller announced that producer/director Steven Spielberg had purchased the Oscar at a Sunday auction for the purpose of presenting it to the Academy. Spielberg paid \$ 607,500 for the statuette.

— AFP/UNB photo



International pop singer Celine Dion is all smiles during the press conference on Tuesday announcing she has sold more than 18 millions copies of "Falling into You" around the world, making it the best selling crossover album of 1996. Dion will close the year with concerts for her fans in Montreal December 17, 18 and 19.

— AFP/UNB photo

Clinton okays new NATO force for Bosnia

WASHINGTON, Dec 18: US President Bill Clinton yesterday approved NATO's plan for a new NATO-led military force, with US military participation, in Bosnia to keep peace in the Balkan country, reports Xinhua.

In a brief written statement, Clinton said he welcomed the NATO decision to move ahead with a Bosnia "Stabilisation Force."

Earlier in the day, the alliance's 16 defence ministers in Brussels approved a final "activation order" to the military to deploy a Stabilisation Force (SFOR) of 31,000 at its peak and to remain in the country for 18 months. The force will include about 8,300 Americans.

The new force takes over from the current Implementation Force (IFOR) policing the Dayton peace accord on December 20, the day its mandate expires. The accord, brokered by the United States and reached in the OHIO city of Dayton, the US, helped bring an end to the 43-month war in November, 1995.

"By preventing the parties from sliding back into armed conflict and providing more breathing space for political and economic efforts to take

hold, SFOR will help Bosnians assume full responsibility for their future — a future without an outside military presence," Clinton said.

Tigers kill 8 Lankan troops

COLOMBO, Dec 18: Tamil rebels detonated underwater explosives, killing eight government soldiers bathing in a river in northeastern Sri Lanka, military officials said Wednesday, reports AP.

Two soldiers were injured in Tuesday's attack in Janakapura village, about 230 kilometres (145 miles) northeast of Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital.

The guerrilla fled into nearby jungles carrying the weapons seized from the soldiers, said the officials who cannot be identified under briefing rules.

Also on Tuesday, a rebel suicide bomber crashed his explosive-laden motorcycle into a jeep, killing the deputy chief of Sri Lanka's elite police commando unit.

No mention about \$ 1.3 b US debt  
New UN chief calls for help from member states

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 18: The newly elected UN chief Tuesday called on UN member states to embark on a healing process to keep the world body from perishing due to "indifference, inattention or financial starvation," reports AFP.

In a speech to the 185-member UN General Assembly following his election as the next UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan of Ghana said "let us embark on a time of healing."

He went on: "Applaud us when we prevail, correct us when we fail, but above all, do not let this indispensable, irreplaceable institution wither, languish or perish as a result of member state indifference, inattention or financial starvation."

Annan did not refer directly to Washington's failure to pay its 1.3 billion dollars debt, which has triggered an unprecedented financial crisis for the world body and led to tensions between the United States and its UN partner.

But in a further allusion to the United States, Annan called for "a healing of fractures and frictions between member states and this organisation, which cannot function without their political and material support."

Annan noted that "There is no lack of blueprints for a new, post-cold war United Nations. There is no lack of ideas or debate."

What we need is consensus and commitment. "The time to choose is now. For this organisation, along with the rest of the world, must change. Let every member state welcome this change, not resist it. Let us make change our ally, not our enemy. Seize it as an opportunity, not a threat, recognize it as a necessity, not an imposition."

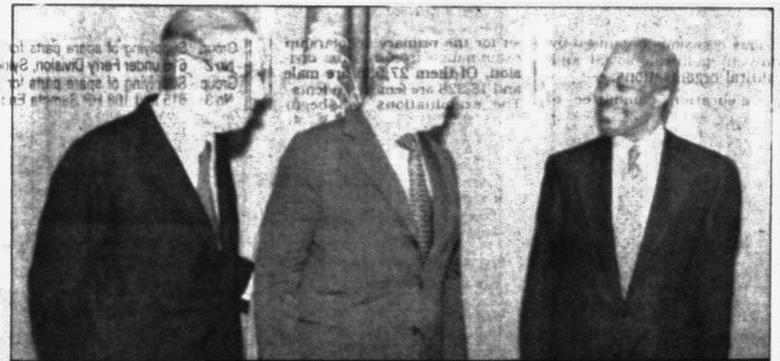
Annan said that as UN chief from January 1 he intended to present his independent views to member states for their consideration. Annan takes over from

Boutros-Boutros-Ghali, whose candidacy for a second term was blocked by Washington, on January 1.

Another report says: The 185-nation General Assembly on Tuesday elected Kofi Annan to a five-year term as UN chief, amid optimism that his appointment would produce a long-awaited political truce with Washington.

Calls mounted Tuesday at the United Nations for 58-year-old Annan, who was perceived as the US candidate before his selection last Friday by the UN Security Council, to ensure that the world body's largest contributor pays its dues to the world body.

In a veiled reference to Washington in a hard-hitting valedictory speech to the assembly, outgoing UN chief Boutros Boutros-Ghali stressed that "now new secretary-general is being appointed, all arrears should be paid at once as has been promised so often in the past few months."



Newly sworn in Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan of Ghana (R) poses with outgoing Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (L) and former Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar (C) on Tuesday at the United Nations. Annan said in his first speech as secretary-general that the UN's financial stability would be his first priority.

— AFP/UNB photo

Attempt on Ecuadorean president foiled

BOGOTA, Dec 18: Colombian security forces on Tuesday foiled an assassination attempt against Ecuadorean President Abdala Bucaram, when they captured a man carrying an explosive-packed suitcase as he entered city hall, sources at the president's office told AFP.

Bucaram was due to visit Bogota Mayor Arntanas Mockus minutes after the man was arrested during a routine search at the entrance to city hall, the source said.

Last month, the Ecuadorean government said a mid-air fire aboard a helicopter accompanying Bucaram on a domestic trip was also an attempt on his life.

Zahra Aga Khan to marry Mark Boyden of UK

GOUVIEUX, France, Dec 18: The Aga Khan and Princess Salimah Aga Khan on Monday announced the engagement of their only daughter, Princess Zahra Aga Khan to Mark Boyden, only son of Mr. & Boyden of England, says a press release received in Dhaka.

Prince Zahra the eldest of the Aga Khan and Princess Salimah Aga Khan's three children, was born in Geneva on September 18, 1970. She attended Le Rosey School in Switzerland and subsequently Harvard University, from where she graduated in 1994 with an Honours Degree in Third World development studies. Since completing her university studies Princess Zahra has worked at her father's secretariat, where she is actively involved in social development activities, focusing particularly on women's development and provision of safety nets for the very poor in Africa and Asia.

Mark Boyden was born in London on November 5, 1961. He attended Dartington Hall School. Subsequently he completed Masters in Business Administration at Oxford Brookes University, concentrating on business ethics with special reference to human rights and child labour in the developing world.

Depression raises risk of heart attack

WASHINGTON: People who suffer from deep depression are at higher risk of having a heart attack than those who are never depressed according to a study published by the journal circulation, reports AFP.

Researchers at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health who studied the medical history of 2,000 people found that those who had suffered a major depression were four times more likely to have had a heart attack.

The results to this study may change the way primary care practitioners think about depression, the study's lead author Laura Pratt wrote.

She added that physicians could now take depression into account when analysing other heart attack risk factors such as smoking, high cholesterol and high blood pressure.

Researcher William Eaton noted that while medicines taken for depression had been suspected of contributing to heart attacks, "our data suggests it is depression that causes risk for heart attacks, not medications."

Arafat-Netanyahu summit meet likely next week

JERUSALEM, Dec 18: Israeli and Palestinian officials seeking to finalize Israel's withdrawal from Hebron will try next week to arrange a summit meeting between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, reports AP.

He (Arafat) is in Europe until Sunday and when he comes back we'll discuss the possibility of a summit, Netanyahu's media and policy adviser David Bar-Illan said Tuesday.

In Hebron on Tuesday, Palestinian students set up a blackboard outside the campus gates of Islamic University and held a makeshift class to protest the 10-month Israeli closure of the university.

Troops punched and kicked several students who refused to

leave from the shuttered campus gates. Students have been protesting at the site daily for the past two weeks, turning the university into trigger point in the already volatile city.

Israel is to hand over four-fifths of Hebron to the Palestinian Authority, but Israeli troops will remain in the downtown Jewish enclaves, where about 500 settlers live surrounded by 130,000 Arabs.

More than two months of negotiations on an Israeli troop pullback have failed to produce an agreement. The last round of talks was held Monday.

Netanyahu has accused Arafat of delaying the signing of an agreement. Arafat has accused Netanyahu of trying to change a pact on Hebron that was signed by the previous Israeli government.

BRIEFLY

Gowda visits Mother Teresa:

The condition of Mother Teresa, recovering from heart surgery and pneumonia, improved yesterday, a regular medical update by her doctors said. Reuter reports from New Delhi.

Indian Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda visited the 86-year-old Roman Catholic nun, winner of the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize, at the hospital on Tuesday and offered her a bouquet of roses with wishes for a speedy recovery.

"Mother Teresa is better today. She had a good sleep last night. She had her morning tea around 0730 and morning prayer at 0815 hrs," said the medical bulletin issued at 8:30 am (0300 GMT) by Calcutta's BM Birla Heart Research Centre.

43 more executed in China:

Some 43 criminals have been executed in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou, amid a dramatic intensification of the country's "strike hard" campaign that has led to 120 executions in the space of a week, AFP reports from Beijing.

The sentences against the 43 were read out at public rallies in seven separate districts of the city, the Yangcheng Evening News reported yesterday. All those condemned were then taken to the main Guangzhou execution ground and killed with a bullet to the back of the head, the newspaper said.

Canada-EU sign jt accord:

Canada and the 15-nation European Union signed a joint declaration and action plan in Ottawa Tuesday that could help prevent large-scale disputes, AFP reports from Ottawa.

The agreement "will improve the possibilities of heading off disputes before they happen," said Sir Leon Brittan, a vice president of the EU's executive commission. This was an apparent reference to last year's "fish war" between Canada and the EU which culminated with the arrest by Canada of a Spanish trawler fishing in international waters off the Newfoundland coast.

Letter bomb kills 3 in Colombia:

A letter bomb exploded in the northeastern Colombian city of Monteria, killing at least three people and injuring at least 37 others Tuesday, police said, AFP reports from Bogota.

The blast rocked a building housing the offices of the Cordoba ranchers fund. It has been a staunch opponent of rebel groups operating in the area. The building was partially destroyed, and nearby buildings were damaged by the blast, witnesses said.

Witch buried alive in Zambia:

A 70-year-old woman was buried alive at the weekend in northern Zambia after she was accused of causing the death of a young boy through witchcraft, press reports said Tuesday, AFP reports from Lusaka.

The ZIS quoting eyewitnesses said the woman whose name was not disclosed was beaten by relatives of the boy and forced to go and bury him. Holding the boy in her hands she set out to bury him but while in the grave to place the body properly she was buried alive together with the boy by angry relatives and friends.

Leghari must resign to ensure fair polls

ISLAMABAD, Dec 18: Deposed Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto Tuesday demanded the immediate resignation of President Farooq Ahmed Leghari, accusing him of trying to undermine fair elections, reports AFP.

"There cannot be fair elections" if Leghari remains in power, she told a news conference here, adding: "Leghari is desperately seeking to disqualify us."

Bhutto was dismissed by Leghari last month on accusations of administrative irregularities, corruption and lawlessness.

Through a proclamation on November 5, the president also dissolved the national assembly and ordered new elections for February 3 under a caretaker government led by Malik Meraj Khalid.

Denying charges of corruption, she said the caretaker government had "failed" to bring any charge against her. "This shows that the government was dissolved illegally, undemocratically and unconstitutionally," she added.

Lashing out at Leghari she said "He murdered the national assembly and nullified the will of the people."

"We call upon the president to step down because in his presence we cannot expect a fair hearing from the Supreme Court," Bhutto said, referring to a legal challenge she has filed to her dismissal.

Accusing Leghari of corruption, she said the president wanted to "protect and promote corruption elite."

She said he is hoping for a hung parliament, under which he could install a puppet Prime Minister who would allow him to assume powers beyond those granted under the constitution.

Bhutto said it had not yet decided whether her party would participate in the elections, adding the party leadership would make the decision collectively.

She complained that Nawaz Sharif's government — sacked in 1993 by then President Ghulam Ishaq Khan — was restored by the Supreme Court within five weeks of its dissolution, while her petition was still pending in the court.

"People are disturbed over the double standards being applied in Pakistan," Bhutto said.

Accusing Leghari of leading a campaign to dismember her Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), she said several PPP people had been jailed. The president who "abused" his position wants to "hijack" the PPP, she added.

Maoists free 16 abducted workers

NEW DELHI, Dec 18: Maoist guerrillas abducted 60 workers of a national road-building firm in the eastern Indian state of Bihar but later released 16 of them, the United News of India said Tuesday, reports AFP.

It said guerrillas of the outlawed Maoist communist centre group kidnapped workers of India's border road construction institution from a colliery in the Bihar coalfields of Basantpur on Monday.

"Should that happen, all prospects for the United Nations would be lost," Boutros-Ghali told the General Assembly, which met Tuesday to appoint Annan to a five-year term effective Jan. 1. "The secretary-general's loyalty must be international and nothing but international."

The United States vetoed Boutros-Ghali for a second term in the Security Council on Nov. 19. US Ambassador Madeleine Albright said Washington wanted a secretary-general who thinks about reform "first thing when he gets up in the morning."

In a clear swipe at Albright, Boutros-Ghali said that during his five years in office "the first thing I thought of when I awoke in the morning were my responsibilities as secretary-general to the ideal of the (UN) charter and credibility of the organization."

Boutros-Ghali said that his five-year term began with considerable enthusiasm as the end of the Cold War brought new possibilities for the United Nations to play an effective role in a world no longer divided into hostile camps.

"But the middle years of this

half decade were deeply troubled," he said. "Disillusion set in."

He cited crises in Somalia, the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, where "the concept of peacekeeping was turned on its head and worsened by the serious gap between mandates and resources."

"And it emerged that the conditions for major reform of the United Nations did not yet exist," he said. "The decisions required far exceeded the authority of any secretary-general. Extensive reform of the United Nations can only emerge from a consensus among mem-



Picture taken during the engagement ceremony of Princess Zahra Aga Khan (L), elder daughter of the Aga Khan and Princess Salimah Aga Khan, with Mark Boyden, on Monday in Gouvieux, France. The couple should get married in Spring 1997.

— AFP/UNB photo

Boutros Ghali blames US for UN financial crisis

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 18: In his farewell address as UN secretary-general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali blamed the UN financial crisis on deadbeat governments and not mismanagement, reports AP.

He also used the opportunity to take some final swipes at the United States, which cost him a second term. And the 74-year-old Egyptian also warned his successor, Kofi Annan of Ghana, to avoid trying to curry favour with a single member state.

Annan is considered an American favorite.

general is being appointed, all arrears should be paid, as has been promised so often in the past few months," he said, referring to Clinton Administration pledges to work with Congress to pay the US bill.

Despite responsibilities to powerful member states, Boutros-Ghali said a secretary-general must protect his independence.

"The holder of this office must never be seen as acting out of fear of, or in an attempt to curry favour with, one state or group of states," he said.

Boutros-Ghali said the process of building a consensus on reform had been hindered by the financial crisis, brought on by the failure of member states to pay their arrears.

The United States — the largest UN contributor — owes the organisation between 1 billion dollar and 1.4 billion dollars.

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