

ROK govt vows to uproot student violence

SEOUL, June 5: Vowing to uproot student violence, the government ordered a nationwide search Thursday for all students who took part in a four-day rampage that left two people dead, reports AP.

Just hours earlier, thousands of members of a radical student group began dispersing after accepting responsibility for the beating death of one of the victims.

The government, using all its powers, should ferret out those responsible for the violence," Prime Minister Koh Kun said in ordering the widespread search at an emergency ministerial meeting.

Koh also apologised to the nation for the government's inability to prevent the violence, triggered by student demonstrations demanding the resignation of President Kim Young-sam.

"I will uproot student violence," he said before attending the funeral for Yoo Ji-woong, a policeman who was killed Monday night during a clash with students. Yoo was hit by a police armoured vehicle.

"Thousands of students, meanwhile, filtered out of Seoul universities overnight. They

had been holed up on the campuses since Friday, demanding that the government allow them to hold a rally celebrating the election of new leaders.

Some 2,000 students then gathered at Seoul National University to hold a hurried, shortened version of their inaugural celebration, which had been banned by the government because the organisation is seen as a tool of Communist North Korea.

"I stand here and promise that our anti-government efforts from now on will be peaceful," said Kang Eui-won, the head of the student group Hanchongryun.

Kang, wearing a black headband and tie, said his group accepted responsibility for the Wednesday death of Lee Seok, a 23-year-old factory worker.

Lee was tied down and beaten by students Tuesday night because he was suspected of being a police informant. Hanchongryun said he was left in the student council office overnight, and was unconscious Wednesday morning. Lee was taken to the Hanyang University hospital and declared dead on arrival.

A preliminary autopsy report Thursday showed Lee died

from loss of blood after massive internal bleeding.

Kang said students responsible for the beating will be turned over to the police later Thursday.

AFP adds: South Korean Prime Minister Koh Kun today ordered the arrest of radical student leaders after a presumed police informant was beaten to death on a Seoul campus.

The government must mobilise all available police forces, hunt down the leaders of the recent violence and behind-the-scenes forces and sternly punish them," Koh told an emergency meeting of Cabinet ministers.

He also called on the government to take steps to put an end to what he called repeated violence by student radicals, and ban them from using campus student halls and raising money by operating vending machines.

Under the directive, which called for the crackdown to be completed by the end of the month, police set up task forces in provinces and major cities across the country to hunt down the leaders, those responsible for the death and others involved in violence.

Kim's son indicted

SEOUL, South Korea, June 5: A son of President Kim Young-sam was charged with bribery and tax evasion Thursday in a corruption scandal that has crippled his father's administration, reports AP.

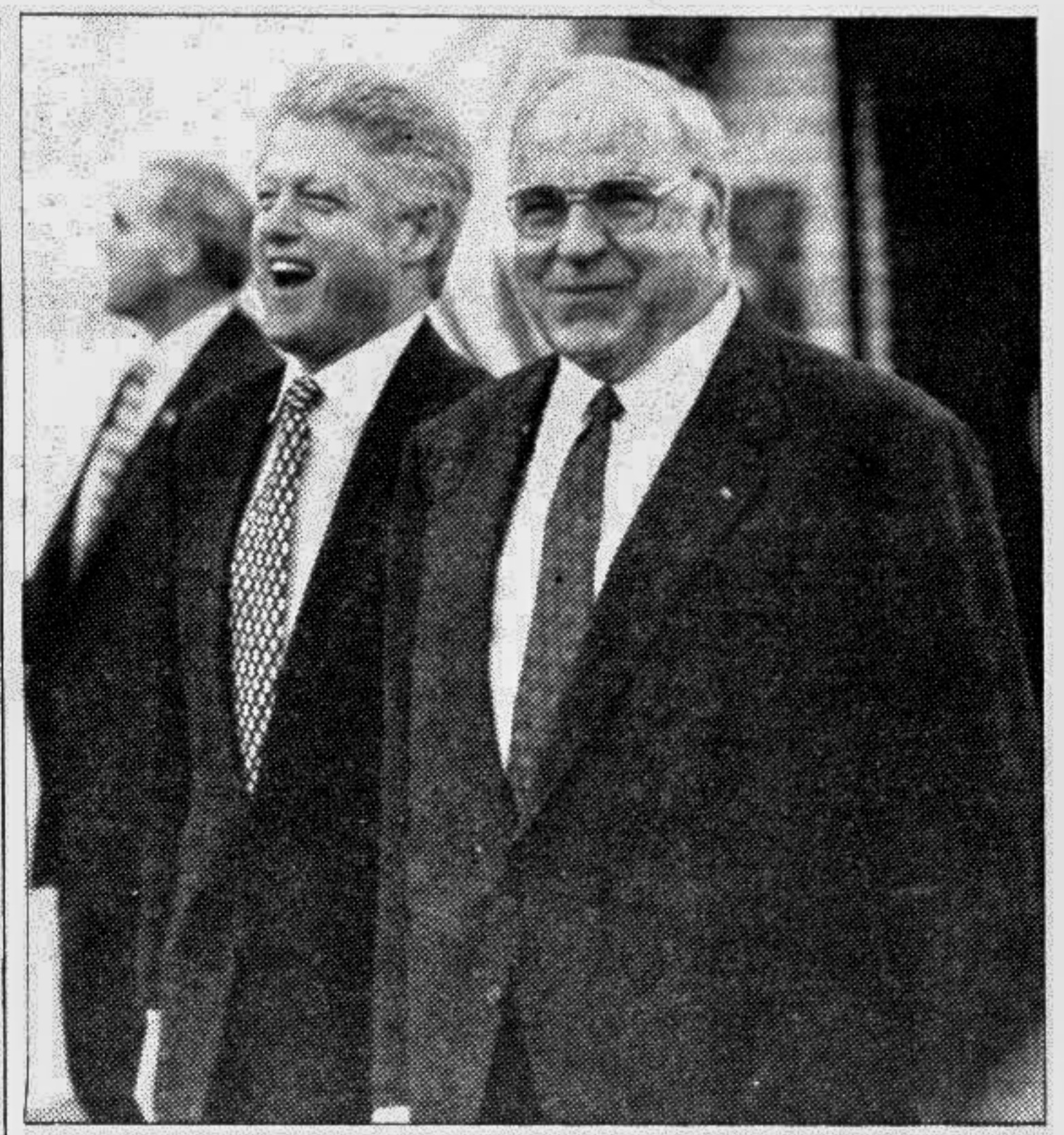
The son's indictment was the final act in a four-month investigation by state prosecutors — a probe marked by damaging media leaks, opposition allegations and violent student protests.

Kim Hyun-chul, 37, was charged with taking 3.22 billion won (dls 3.6 million) in bribes from two businessmen seeking government contracts and licenses and his influence in a court case over a stock dispute.

Prosecutors also charged him with taking 3.39 billion won (dls 3.8 million) in cash from four businessmen and laundering the money to evade dls 1.5 million in taxes. Those payments were not bribes, they said.

The younger Kim, arrested May 17, was the first close relative of an incumbent South Korean president to face criminal charges.

Such a prosecution move would have been unthinkable when the nation was ruled by the military leaders who preceded Kim. If found guilty of both bribery and tax evasion, he could be sentenced to life in prison.



US President Bill Clinton (L) and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl walk to Filomena restaurant in the Georgetown section of Washington, DC after speaking with the press Wednesday. Kohl is to be honoured at the 50th anniversary celebration of the Marshall Plan today in Washington, DC.

— AFP/UNB photo

Italian PM arrives in Beijing:

Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi arrived in Beijing yesterday for a two-day visit, the official Xinhua news agency reported, AFP says from Beijing.

Prodi, who is in China at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart Li Peng, is heading a large business delegation that also includes trade minister Augusto Fantozzi. It is his first trip to China as Prime Minister.

WWII bomb detonated in France: Explosives experts on Wednesday detonated a British World War II bomb found on a work site near the prestigious new National French Library, police said, AFP reports from Paris.

Bomb disposal experts dug a crater 10 metres (30 feet) deep to explode the device after all attempts to disarm it failed. About 1,500 people living near the site were evacuated as a precaution before the successful controlled blast. The bomb was inadvertently brought to the site in a lorry-load of gravel.

Chinese dissident Bao Ge freed: Shanghai dissident Bao Ge has been released after completing a three-year term in a labour camp, sources close to the family said yesterday, AFP reports from Shanghai.

"Bao Ge was released from the Dafeng labour camp in Jiangsu province at 8.30 Wednesday evening," said a young woman who identified herself only as a friend of the family. "He got home late last night, but his telephone line has been cut so he can't make direct contact," she added.

Anne Michaels wins 'Orange Award': Canadian writer Anne Michaels won the Orange Award for women's fiction Wednesday with her first novel "Fugitive Pieces," AP reports from London.

Michaels, an award-winning poet who teaches creative writing at Toronto University, took 10 years to write the book, about a Jewish boy, Jakob Beer, and his escape from Poland to Canada in World War II.

"The characters came to me very vividly and wouldn't go away," Michaels, 39, said at the awards ceremony at the National Liberal Club, central London. The award, worth 30,000 pounds (dls 48,000) to the winner, is open for women of any nationality writing in English.

Dutch woman killed in Vietnam: A Dutch woman visiting southern Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City was stabbed to death during a botched robbery inside a crowded market, a Dutch diplomat said Thursday, AP reports from Ho Chi Minh City.

It was one of the first times a foreigner was killed during a crime in post-war Vietnam, which boasts an impressively low crime rate in Asia. The 26-year-old woman, whose name has not been released pending notification of her relatives, was stabbed once in the back and once in the chest Wednesday morning, said Chris Van Vliet, a diplomat for the Netherlands based in Ho Chi Minh City.

UAE donates medicines to Iraq: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has donated 325 tonnes of medicines to sanctions-hit Iraq, a representative of the UAE's Red Crescent said Wednesday, AFP reports from Baghdad.

Said Mohamed al-Mansouri told reporters that the medicines, worth 1.1 million dollars, arrived in Iraq on Tuesday on board eight refrigerated trucks and that distribution began to four Baghdad hospitals on Wednesday. The UAE has sent Iraq three loads of food and medicine so far this year.

36 workers feared dead in Thailand: Thirty-six Thai women factory workers were feared dead after a bus taking them to a night shift plunged into an irrigation canal in northern Lopburi province early this morning, police said, Reuters reports from Bangkok.

The chartered bus was carrying 51 people, including the driver, when the accident occurred shortly after midnight at Baan Mee district about 180 km (85 miles) north of Bangkok. A police official told Reuters that 25 bodies had been recovered from the canal and 11 more were still missing. The bus driver and 14 others escaped with injuries, he said.

Probable aspirants for Indian president

NEW DELHI, June 5: Indian election officials on Thursday set a date next month for a presidential election that has drawn an unusual cast of contenders, reports AP.

The hopefuls, who began campaigning in recent weeks, include a grand daughter of independence leader Mohandas Gandhi; a political reformer known for his unorthodox temper; and — the front runner — an ex-diplomat who comes from India's lowest social caste, the untouchables.

Current President Shanker Dayal Sharma's 5-year term expires July 24, and he has not said if he will seek another. On Thursday, India's Chief Election Commissioner announced that the presidential vote will be held on July 14. Candidates will have to file their nominations by June 23, said Commissioner Manohar Singh Gill.

The candidates this year reflect the shifting center of gravity in Indian politics, away from the highborn elite of northern India toward the traditionally disenfranchised minority. Among them are:

— Vice President K R Narayanan, born in a village in southern India, he comes from the untouchable caste.

Narayanan is a mild, self-effacing former university professor, diplomat and legislator. One of the few politicians unscathed by controversy or scan-

dal, he is favored by the Congress Party and liked by United Front coalition's Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral.

— Sumitra Gandhi-Kulkarni, political novice whose main plus is her maiden name and cheerful disposition. She was a member of parliament briefly in the 1970s. No woman has ever served as India's president.

Mrs Gandhi-Kulkarni says she wants to inject the high ethics preached by her grandfather — who always shunned public office even though he was the most influential Indian of his time — into today's politics.

The daughter of Gandhi's eldest son says that the first citizen can influence politics by setting an example.

"I am not affiliated to any party, so I am above politics," she said.

— T N Seshan, who was credited with reducing fraud as chief election commissioner from 1991-96. But during that same period, his unpredictable tantrums and dictatorial style outraged most politicians.

The former bureaucrat from southern India is lobbying local leaders for support in several states.

The president is elected by state and federal legislators — election commission on Thursday said that voters are not bound by their party whips and cannot be punished for voting as they choose.

Rao discharged in St. Kitts bribery case

Neelesh Misra writes from New Delhi

Former Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao won a crucial victory in his legal battle against investigators on Wednesday when a court threw out charges against him in a 1989 forgery case.

"There is no case made out against P.V. Narasimha Rao and he is therefore discharged," judge Aji Bharihoke said in his ruling on the St. Kitts case at the June 4 hearing. The judge also discharged Rao's co-accused, former Union Minister K.K. Tewary, but ordered framing of charges against controversial religious guru Chandraswamy and his aide Kailashnath Aggarwal in the case.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had accused the four of hatching a conspiracy to forge documents to sully the reputation of former Prime Minister V.P. Singh ahead of the 1989 general election.

"All I can say is that I am happy," Rao told reporters as he came out of the packed courtroom. The judge said Chandraswamy and Aggarwal would be charged with forging documents with an intention to malign the reputation (of V.P. Singh).

Rao's aides at the hearing said they expected the ruling to also give a boost to his political fortunes. The former Prime Minister, whose Congress Party government was dislodged in the 1996 general election, resigned from the post of party

president following an adverse court ruling in a cheating case.

Soon after, Rao was forced out of his last important position, that of leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party, following pressure from his peers who have now sidelined

Cabinet, had been accused of conspiring to show that Ajeya Singh, son of V.P. Singh had deposited \$21 million in a secret account in the First Trust Corporation Limited (FTCL) in the Caribbean island of St. Kitts. The money was purportedly part of amounts got by V.P. Singh in kickbacks in India.

In a chargesheet filed in October 1996 by the CBI, the agency had alleged that Rao had instructed consulate officials in New York to attest the signatures of George Maclean, Managing Director of FTCL, in an attempt to show by forgery that Ajeya Singh's account existed.

Rao's counsel R.K. Anand had given the case a dramatic twist recently when he told the judge that his client had acted in the case on the instructions of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. The statement drew rebuke from the party's president Sitaram Kesri, who said the Gandhi was an "uncivilized" attempt to "denigrate a dead leader."

Rao now has two cases pending against him. In a 1983 cheating case, he is accused of conspiring with Chandraswamy and Aggarwal to swindle the late nonresident Indian businessman Lakhubhai Pathak out of \$100,000. In another case, he is accused of bribing opposition lawmakers to save his government in a 1993 Parliament no-trust vote.

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Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (R) meets with Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz in Cairo Wednesday. Talks focused on the deadlocked Middle East peace process and bilateral relations. — AFP/UNB photo

OAU reaffirms support for UN disarmament body

HARARE, June 5: African leaders, ending their 33rd summit here, today reaffirmed their support for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, reports Xinhua.

A decision adopted at the summit said the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) would work closely with the centre for "the promotion of preventive diplomacy, peaceful resolution of conflicts, disarmament, peace, security and humanitarian activities."

The decision called on African states, African sub-regional organisations and the international community to "pay voluntary contributions to enable the regional center to successfully implement its programmes of activities and improve its services."

The African leaders also requested the UN General Assembly to invite the UN Secretary General to take the necessary administrative measures to ensure, among other things, the smooth functioning of the centre.

Our constitution doesn't give us the authority to sell our sovereignty to an international body," Paul said, reflecting the increasingly anti-UN sentiments of many Americans.

Republicans have so far balked at President Bill Clinton's attempt to repay US arrears to the United Nations.

The United Nations says the United States owes about 1.5

Move to withdraw US from UN defeated

WASHINGTON, June 5: A move to have the United States withdrawn from the United Nations was defeated by the US House of representatives on Wednesday but 54 legislators supported the measure, reports AFP.

Legislators spent more than an hour debating the wisdom of continued US membership in the United Nations after Republican representative Ron Paul of Texas sponsored an amendment to the Foreign Relations Authorisation Act that would withdraw the United States from the world body.

The move was defeated 369-54.

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The United Nations says the United States owes about 1.5

billion dollars in arrears. The figure is disputed by the Clinton administration and the Republican-controlled Congress, which both have offered lower estimates ranging from 800 million to one billion dollars.

Congress's decision in 1995 to unilaterally cut from 25 per cent to 20 per cent the US contribution to the UN peacekeeping budget is largely responsible for current US arrears.

While it was defeated, Paul's measure won support of many conservatives, especially from southern and rural areas of the country.

Republicans and Democrats alike urged lawmakers to give UN reforms a chance.

Democrat Alcee Hastings of Florida said he and other representatives had recently travelled to the Democratic Republic of Congo and only got there thanks to a UN plane.

And he argued that UN efforts in Angola "have saved millions of dollars and kept the peace" there.

How salt makes food taste good?

NEW YORK, June 5: Every good chef knows that salt makes things taste better — but until now, science hasn't shaken out the reason why, reports AP.

A new study shows that salt suppresses bitter tastes, bringing sweet and sour flavours to the fore.

That may not sound like a big revelation. But it could help food designers concoct more effective salt substitutes for people with high blood pressure.

It was a simple experiment by Paul Breslin of the Monell Chemical Senses Centre in Philadelphia that cracked the salt nut. Breslin offered people tastes of sugar, the salt relative sodium acetate and urea, a bitter substance, in every possible combination.

He used sodium acetate instead of sodium chloride because it enhances flavour like table salt without delivering its powerful salty taste, which can confuse subjects.

With each flavour combination, the researchers asked their subjects to rate how much sweetness, saltiness or bitterness they tested.

It turned out that all of the flavours inhibited each other, but the sodium acetate salt inhibited the bitter urea more than it did the sugar. So when all three were sweet together, the result was sweet compared with the urea-sugar combinations.

"Everything suppresses everything else, but the sodium is special for the bitter," Breslin said. "If you add salt, you're going to knock out the bitter taste."

Kofi Annan hopes Mediation can help end crisis in Sierra Leone

LONDON, June 5: Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan said in London yesterday that he hoped the current crisis in Sierra Leone could be resolved by negotiations, but he refused to rule out a military intervention in the conflict-stricken Western African country, reports Xinhua.

Speaking at a press briefing after talks with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, Annan said that he preferred a peaceful solution to the stand-off between Sierra Leone armed forces and Nigerian troops trying to restore the ousted Sierra Leone president.

"Ideally, I would prefer negotiations. It must be clear to the coup leaders that they don't have the support of the people they don't have the support of their neighbors, they don't have the support of the region and they don't have the support of the international community, Annan said.

"How they expect to survive I do not know. I wish they would be sensible and cut their losses and walk away," he added.

Asked whether a multinational armed force could be sent to Sierra Leone, the UN chief said, "If use of force become a last resort and is inevitable, it may have to come to that."

During the one-hour meeting between Annan and Cook, they also exchanged views on the reforms of the United Nations and other international issues.

Voting begins in Algeria

ALGIERS, June 5: Millions of Algerians vote today in the first parliamentary elections since the north African country was plunged into violence five years ago, reports Reuters.

Algerian armed forces on Wednesday stepped up security across the country to try to avert any attempts by Islamist guerrillas to sabotage the polling.

Nearly 17 million people are eligible to choose from more than 7,700 candidates representing 39 political parties for the 380-seat national assembly (lower house).

More than 37,500 polling stations will open from 8 am (0700 GMT) to 7 pm (1800 GMT) although local authorities may extend polling hours in some centres to help voters.

Kabila vows to hold multi-party polls within two years

WASHINGTON, June 5: The President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Laurent Kabila, has promised to hold multi-party elections within two years, a group of congressional lawmakers said here Wednesday, reports AFP.

"Kabila assured us he would hold democratic elections within two years," said California representative Ew. Royce, president of the house subcommittee on African affairs.

"This was reassuring since Kabila has banned virtually all political parties," Royce, just returned from a week-long visit to Africa, said in a news release.

Royce said Kabila, who ousted Mobutu Sese Seko from the country he had ruled for nearly 30 years as Zaire, "had concerns about the divisiveness of political parties" in the chaotic Central African country.

Royce said Kabila asked for US aid in drawing up a new constitution for the impoverished country while the Americans expressed to him their "concerns about the treatment of refugees in eastern Congo."

Ex-dictator forms alliance to win polls in Bolivia

LA PAZ, Bolivia, June 5: Former dictator Gen. Hugo Banzer Suarez was assured the presidency of Bolivia after forming an alliance with a former president and a beer baron, reports AP.

Banzer, who led the field of 10 candidates in Sunday's election with 22 per cent of the votes, told a cheering crowd that his government will fight corruption, poverty, drug trafficking and injustice.

India justifies circumspect policy on Afghanistan

Tarun Basu writes from New Delhi

The Indian government, pilloried in the media here for "backing the wrong horse" in the Afghan power struggle, is feeling almost vindicated over its circumspect policy in the wake of reverses suffered by the Taliban in northern Afghanistan.

"It is better to wait and watch than to commit first and regret later in such a fluid situation," a senior External Affairs Ministry official told India Abroad News Service, obliquely referring to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia rushing to extend recognition to the Taliban regime in Kabul.

Officially the Indian government has said it regards the Afghan developments as an internal affair of that country and trotted out the old line that it is for the Afghan people to decide their own destiny without outside interference or influ-

ence. It merely recognized the "extension of Taliban authority" to the northern areas and the "departure from Afghanistan of senior leaders opposed to them." Some analysts saw this as preparing the ground for official recognition of the Taliban reality in Afghanistan, which New Delhi has been loathe to do because the Taliban's fundamentalist ideology was completely at odds with its pluralist principles.

The weekend reports of northern alliances repulsing the Taliban advances strengthened the Indian belief that the war was far from over and that it would be premature to write off the resistance of Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum or Panjshir commander Ahmed Shah Massoud, Defence Minister in the ousted regime of President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

In November last, two Indian diplomats had made a Kissinger-style secret foray into northern Afghanistan to establish contacts with Gen Dostum. Gen Dostum had then told the Indian diplomats that he would like to see a role for India in Afghanistan's conflict resolution and subsequent relief and rehabilitation.

The Mazar-i-Sharif meeting, coupled with India's presence at two Afghanisthan conferences held in Tehran and New York last year, were seen as a recognition of the Indian role in international efforts to end the Afghan civil war. This was in the face of opposition from Pakistan which did not want India to "intrude" into an area that it considered its sphere of influence.

Pakistan at that time boycotted a meeting called by Iran to protest India's inclusion in it. Last week, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Yelayati called Prime Minister I.K. Gujral to brief him on the Afghan situation and to seek Indian humanitarian assistance for the war-affected people in the

northern provinces, officials said.

India feels that it is in no hurry to take a position on Afghanistan as the situation is unlikely to crystallize too soon in the see-saw battle between the Taliban and its opponents. Even though key commanders had reportedly split with Gen Dostum to side with the Taliban, officials do not underestimate the burly Uzbek general's capacity to regroup his forces or the battle-scarred Massoud's resilience in the face of severe odds.

Massoud has been a widely acclaimed hero of the Afghan Mujahideen resistance and was known as the "Lion of Panjshir" for the way he frustrated Russian efforts to control a strategic valley that connected the capital Kabul with the Salang Highway leading to the then Soviet Union.

The local media has criticised India's External Affairs Ministry for its "passivity" on Afghanistan and said it could

be pushed to a sideline role in the conflict. But Indian officials say that there is little room for diplomatic adventurism at this time and they are in touch with Iran, Russia and other Central Asian countries which are equally concerned about the Afghanisthan developments.

"Since it is an evolving situation, our policy has also to be modulated according to the prevailing circumstances. It cannot afford to remain static," the Indian official said.

The official however underlined that perhaps Afghanistan needed India more than India needed Afghanistan. "The Afghans are constantly seeking medical treatment in Indian hospitals and Indian medical and other humanitarian assistance is in great demand in Kabul, irrespective of the regime in power there," the official said.

He said India was the destination for the bulk of Afghanistan's dry fruit exports

and Afghans of Indian origin had been carrying on their business through non-formal channels even after the official trade between the countries had virtually dried up.

Whatever, New Delhi may do or may not do, it needs to be stern in its warnings against any madness on Kashmir," Mr Katyal wrote, reflecting popular apprehensions on the implications of the Taliban's ascendance in Afghanistan.

— India Abroad News Service