

### Kesri set to win Cong leadership struggle

NEW DELHI, June 8: Sitaram Kesri is set to win a bitter struggle for the leadership of India's oldest political bloc Monday but rivals say the aged chief's re-election will not refurbish the party's flagging image, reports AFP.

Kesri, 77, who served the Congress (I) for more than 50 years, is widely expected to trounce his rivals in Monday's nationwide elections to pick new party functionaries and a president but the 112-year-old party, which suffered its worst electoral defeat last year, will lose in the long run they say.

The former party treasurer is being challenged by ex-defence minister Sharad Pawar, a leader from India's most industrialised state, and Rajesh Pilot, a self-proclaimed "peasant leader."

An opinion poll by the India Today fortnightly news-magazine said 60 per cent of the 8,200 party workers, who are due to vote Monday, supported Kesri.

It said only 2,668 were anti-Kesri while 867 were "undecided."

"Kesri will certainly win the election," a senior leader said on condition of anonymity.

But others, both within the party and outside, say his re-election will mean that the scandal-tainted party will carry on functioning in its usual style with an all-powerful executive that has little accountability.

"He is amoral," said Pilot. "He is unable to deliver the goods. You need somebody today who has the dynamism to carry the party together, who understands the pulse of the people."

In Kesri's eight or nine months, the party has gone down.

Kesri became Congress president in September after virtually forcing out former prime minister PV Narasimha Rao, who was implicated in several corruption scandals. He then promised to "galvanise" the party.

But his tenure was marred by his sudden and unilateral withdrawal of Congress' key support to India's ruling multi-party coalition in March.

He backtracked later, ending a political crisis only after the alliance changed the prime minister.

## Cong (I) delegates to elect new party president today

NEW DELHI, June 8: Congress delegates across the country will elect their new president tomorrow in a direct election in two decades at the end of a bitter campaign in the party in which the era of charismatic leaders has ended, reports PTI.

Incumbent Chief, Sitaram Kesri, who was appointed party president by the CWC in September last year in the wake of resignation of RPV Narasimha Rao, is locked in a triangular contest with heavy-weight, Sharad Pawar and young Rajesh Pilot.

The contest became inevitable after efforts for a consensus failed and appeals for Sonia Gandhi to take over the leadership were turned down.

Pawar and Pilot have thrown their hat in the ring on the plank that there was an urgent need to rejuvenate the party and an ageing Kesri cannot fill the bill.

The campaign for the contest, the third since independence and fifth in its 112-year Congress history, witnessed charges and countercharges by rival groups bringing to the fore fissures in the party.

The Kesri camp has given ample indications that the real challenge to its leader was from Pawar. One of the Kesri loyalists, Arjun Singh, went to the extent of dubbing the former Maharashtra chief minister as a "proxy candidate" of P V Narasimha Rao, evoking sharp reaction from Pawar supporters.

Likewise, Pawar's main target in his campaign was Kesri. The Maharashtra Rao group has come out in support of Pawar as it fears growing marginalisation of the former prime minister under Kesri.

Both Pawar and Pilot have criticised Kesri's style of leadership saying that with him at the helm, the party cannot fare well in future elections.

Charges of serious irregularities and bogus elections have been levelled by Kesri's opponents, who have said that the delegates' lists had been prepared in the "drawing rooms and bed rooms" of leaders with a view to perpetuating Kesri's reign at the helm.

Kesri has dismissed the charges with his supporters claiming that the rivals were preparing their excuse for their imminent defeat.

Under the Congress constitution, in a multi-cornered contest, every voter has to give his second preference to make his vote valid.

Both the Pawar and Kesri camps have indicated to their followers that the second preference votes should go to Pilot, who has still not indicated what his supporters should do.

### 'Move to admit 3 states may disrupt ASEAN solidarity'

MANILA, June 8: The decision by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to admit Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos has "sowed the seeds of discord" that could disrupt the group's solidarity, a leading Philippine newspaper said today, reports AFP.

Myanmar's accession opened cracks in the wall of ASEAN solidarity that were papered over by the official statement. The Philippine daily inquirer said in its editorial.

It said the decision to admit the three countries was opposed by the Philippines and Thailand, while Singapore had reservations on economic grounds and that "for the first time in its 30-year history, ASEAN was not one big happy, harmonious family."

ASEAN groups Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos are to be formally admitted to ASEAN during a ministerial meeting in July.

## Israel to temporarily halt settlements in West Bank, Gaza

JERUSALEM, June 8: Israel has reportedly agreed to temporarily halt the building of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and a disputed sector of Jerusalem, a sign that the deadlock in peace talks may break soon, reports AP.

The decision paved the way for a Sunday meeting in Cairo involving Israeli Cabinet Secretary Dan Naveh and the chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, Israel Media said.

Both sides are discussing the duration of the construction freeze, Israel TV and radio reported, attributing the information to unidentified Israeli and Palestinian officials.

However, Shai Bazak, a spokesman for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, denied the report.

The Palestinians broke off talks with Israel in mid-March, after Israel broke ground on the neighbourhood of Har Homa, known in Arabic as Jabal Abu Ghneim. The Palestinians said they would only resume peace talks if Israel halted construction in east Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Emanuel Rosen, the political reporter for Israel TV's Channel 2, said Saturday that senior Israeli and Palestinian officials told him Netanyahu "is willing to have a temporary pause in the building of settlements."

Some of the sources said Netanyahu's promise to halt construction also included Har Homa, Rosen said.

Israel radio also reported that Netanyahu has agreed to a temporary building freeze.

Israel TV said the leaks about a construction freeze angered Netanyahu and might scuttle Sunday's meeting in Cairo. Bazak, however, confirmed Saturday night that the meeting would go ahead and that Naveh would attend.

The reports came after Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat met Saturday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo. Egypt has been trying to bring the two sides back to the negotiating table and has urged Netanyahu to agree to a six-month freeze in settlement construction.

## BRIEFLY

**Arafat, Netanyahu talk by phone:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat spoke by telephone over the weekend ahead of a meeting of the two sides' negotiators yesterday, Israel Army radio reported, AFP says from Jerusalem.

The radio did not say who initiated the telephone conversation on Saturday and Israeli and Palestinian officials were not immediately available for comment. Arafat and Netanyahu have not met since February, before the Palestinians broke off peace negotiations in March over Israel's decision to build a new Jewish housing project in disputed East Jerusalem.

**3 WW-II bombs found in UK:** British army engineers yesterday recovered from the sea three prototype bouncing bombs used in the Second World War, Xinhua reports from London.

The bombs, designed by Barnes Wallis and used in an air attack in 1943 to disrupt German war industries, were found in the sea near Herne Bay on Britain's south-east coast. "They are still intact and many of the threads and bolts are still workable," said army spokesman captain Alan Conroy.

**Mild quake shakes Iran:** An earthquake with a magnitude of 4.8 jolted the northern city of Rudbar early Sunday, but there were no reports of casualties or damage, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported, AP reports from Tehran.

Rudbar was completely destroyed in 1990 when two quakes hit the city, killing 50,000 people and leaving half a million homeless. The quake hit at 1:00 am (20:30 GMT Saturday), the agency reported. The city is 225 kilometers (140 miles) northwest of the capital Tehran.

**Bus mishap in Guatemala, 35 dead:** At least 35 people died Saturday when the bus they were traveling in plunged off a mountainous road in the western province of Huehuetenango, authorities said, AP reports from Guatemala City.

Volunteer firemen said they were still working to recover the bodies of the victims. Guatemalan army troops were also helping in the rescue effort. Ambulances from several nearby communities were used to transport injured passengers who had been trapped inside the bus.

**French soldier killed in Congo:** A French soldier was killed and five others were wounded Saturday during a shootout with Congolese troops in Brazzaville, reliable sources said, AFP reports from Kinshasa.

No further details on the incident were immediately available. Heavy artillery fire echoed across the Congo river from the Congolese capital several times on Saturday evening.

## Indo-Nepal agreements herald end to politics of water?

Tarun Basu writes from Kathmandu

The formalisation of a river development treaty and a power trade agreement between India and Nepal during Prime Minister I.K. Gujral's visit here marks a turning point in the long-drawn politics of water in the subcontinent.

It not only opens up Nepal's vast water resources for power generation but is viewed as an example of how cooperative realism can serve the developmental interests of a region where the dilemmas of equitable sharing have marred the prospects of harnessing of its international rivers.

The agreement with Nepal comes after the conclusion of the India-Bangladesh treaty on the sharing of Ganges waters in December last year.

Nepal has an estimated potential for generation of 83,000 megawatts of power. But at present it generates a pitiful 245 MW, or less than one per cent of its potential. The same common rivers that can irrigate five million hectares of land now do a mere 65,000 hectares.

"These incessantly flowing waters have been a stark testimony to the wasted opportunities between the two countries," says Dr Mahendra Lama, a South Asian expert at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, who is here as part of the Indian delegation.

In Nepal, ever since the 1950s, exploitation of the country's water resources has been not only an economic issue but a highly political one. Although a number of India-aided hydro-electric projects have contributed substantially to Nepal's economic development, the delay in implementation of others and the percep-

## Troops make little headway to capture vital road to northern Lanka

COLOMBO, June 8: Government troops made little headway over the weekend into rebel-held territory in their attempt at capturing a vital road to northern Sri Lanka, a military official said Sunday, reports AP.

The bodies of 21 Tamil Tiger rebels were recovered Saturday, said Col WP Withana, a military spokesman. Six soldiers had been killed and 24 injured in the latest fighting.

He said the soldiers had been able to advance about one kilometre (one mile) on Saturday.

On Friday, government soldiers captured Periyamadu, a village close to the heavily fortified rebel-held town of Puliyankulam, 235 kilometres (145 miles) north of the capital, Colombo.

Monitored rebel radio transmissions had indicated government warplanes and artillery fire had made several direct hits Saturday, causing heavy casualties among the rebels, he added.

Thai politicians urged not to use monarchy to kill new charter

BANGKOK, June 8: A member of Thailand's coalition government has urged politicians to stop stirring fears about the monarchy to turn people against a new draft constitution, Radio Thailand reported Sunday, says AP.

Pinit Charusombat, deputy minister of transport and communications and leader of the Seritham Party, criticised those who "are trying to instigate the public against the new charter by heightening the people's fear over changes that affect the monarchy and the justice system."

Washington, June 8: A US ethics panel on Saturday recommended legislation to ban the cloning of entire human beings but would still allow private cloning of human embryos for research, reports Reuters.

The National Bioethics Advisory Commission said these cloned embryos should not be allowed to be implanted into women's wombs to make viable babies, a source familiar with the recommendations said.

President Bill Clinton asked the advisory group in February to review the legal and ethical ramifications of cloning after scientists in Scotland cloned a lamb using a cell from an adult sheep.

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## Lebanon likely to resume diplomatic ties with Iraq

BEIRUT, June 8: Lebanon will "soon" resume diplomatic ties with Iraq and resume bilateral trade, Jacques Sarraf, Chairman of the Lebanese Industrialists Association, expected yesterday, reports Xinhua.

Sarraf, who visited Baghdad heading a powerful delegation of Lebanese businessmen, was quoted by the state-run Lebanon radio as saying that the Lebanese government "will coordinate on this issue with Syria."

Syria, with some 35,000 troops stationed on two thirds of Lebanon's territory, is the most influential foreign broker in this country.

The resumption of diplomatic relations is necessary for a resumption of Lebanon's exports to Iraq, Sarraf pointed out, hoping that Lebanon and Iraq will re-open their embassies in each other's capitals.

The Lebanese industrialists associations has a say in the policy-making of the Lebanese government under the billionaire-turned Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Lebanon broke off diplomatic ties with Iraq in April 1994, over the killing of an Iraqi opposition leader, Talib Suhail Al-Tamimi in Beirut in which the Lebanese government accused Iraqi diplomats of being involved.

However, the relations between Iraq and Lebanon had become tense when Iraq backed Lebanese former army general Michel Aoun in his failed war against Syrian forces in Lebanon in 1989.

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## Janata Dal striving to broker peace between two factions

Mahesh Uniyal writes from New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister I.K. Gujral's Janata Dal (JD) party was trying hard to broker peace between two factions to avoid a likely split in the run up to next week's election of a new organisational chief.

Gujral himself was being proposed as a likely compromise JD president to avert a contest for the party's top post which threatens to splinter the largest member of the 14-party ruling United Front (UF) coalition.

However, the Prime Minister and senior JD leaders decided to attend a controversial Sunday meeting of the JD national executive, which was seen as a boost to the chances of scamtainted Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav being re-elected party chief.

The organisational turmoil in the JD was matched by that in the former ruling Congress party which is keeping Gujral's UF in office. There were fears that the June 9 election of a new Congress president could split the over century-old party which is used to making choices by "consensus".

Yadav had called the JD executive meeting in his capacity as the JD president, appar-

## 500 Neolithic artifacts unearthed

SHIJIAZHUANG, June 8: More than 500 items of stoneware, pottery, and bronze were unearthed while archaeologists were checking a site prior to construction work on a Sino-German power plant in north China's Hebei province, reports Xinhua.

Chinese archaeologists said that the artifacts dated back to the late Stone Age and the early Shang Dynasty (16-11th century BC), and will contribute to the study of local prehistorical culture.

The Neolithic remains include rubbish pits and building site where a large number of red clay pottery pieces and a few bone, stone and painted pottery pieces were found.

The Shang relics, the bronze, pottery, stone, and bone were unearthed in the remains of buildings, kilns, rubbish pits, and tunnels. The bronze pieces were knives, the stoneware consisted of spades, sickles, and axes, and the bone included arrowheads, needles, hair pins, and oracle bones.



French President Jacques Chirac (2ndR), Minister of Culture, Catherine Trautmann (C), and Labour Minister, Martine Aubry (L), watch a painting in the museum of the Beaux Arts in Lille Saturday. Chirac pledged to work with his new socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin but warned that he would not accept any diluting of his presidential authority. — AFP/UNB photo

## Central European FM's pledge to assist Bosnia

SARAJEVO, June 8: Foreign Ministers from 16 Central European countries ended their two-day meeting here on Saturday, pledging to assist Bosnia's reconstruction efforts, reports Xinhua.

The participants of the Central European Initiative (CEI) conference agreed to contribute to the strengthening of stability and reconstruction in Bosnia and called on the international community to boost its role in the country's peace process, said Bosnian Foreign Minister Jadranko Prlic, who is also the chairman of the conference.

According to local press a CEI conference at the level of prime ministers has been initially scheduled for November in Sarajevo.

## Diet rich in green vegetables, fresh fruits can provide protection against cancer

CALCUTTA, June 8: Roughly 35 per cent of cancers may be attributed to food habits and a diet rich in green vegetables and fresh fruits can provide some protection against carcinoma, eminent scientist, Prof Moloy Chatterjee says, reports PTI.

Recent investigations demonstrate a reduction in certain types of spontaneous or chemically induced tumours in animals given an energy-restricted diet, while high fat diets increase carcinogen-induced tumours of the mammary gland, respiratory tract and large intestine in several animal species, says his study published in the international "Cancer Journal," in France.

Epidemiological studies suggest that these also apply to humans, with positive correlations noted between a high-fat diet and breast or intestinal

cancer, even though results of analytical studies of diet in humans remain inconclusive because of study design or inaccuracies in the quantification of dietary intake.

Elaborating, Prof Chatterjee told PTI that three factors, individually or in combination increase an individual's risk of developing cancer — life-style, environment and genetics. But diet is now known to be among the most important environmental risk determinants.

"Scientists, Doll and Peto estimate that life-style and environment factors are related to the development of 90 per cent of cancer incidence, which suggests that in principle most cancer is preventable."

Prof Chatterjee who has been nominated the "international man of the year," 1996/97 by the International

Biographical Centre of Cambridge, is head of the Department of Pharmaceutical Technology, Jadavpore University, Calcutta.

The possible effect on cancers by green vegetables and fresh fruit has been related to the specific nutrients contained in them, particularly Vitamin 'A' and 'C', Prof Chatterjee says.

Despite lack of empirical data on anti-cancer effect of Vitamin 'C' in humans or animals, Prof Chatterjee says, several recent reviews suggest extremely strong and constant evidence of a protective effect against cancer of the stomach, oesophagus, oral cavity and pharynx.

Based on scientific evidence, Prof Chatterjee says, it seems very likely that an intake of Vitamin 'C', higher than the cur-

rently recommended dose, could benefit human health."

The analysis of an integrated series of case control studies further confirm that greater vegetable consumption is associated with a consistently and appreciably reduced risk of a number of epithelial cancers, he says.

Prof Chatterjee said, eating fruit also gives protection, although it appears more specific for cancers of the upper digestive and respiratory tracts, liver, pancreas, prostate and the urinary tract.

Recent attention has also been focussed on naturally occurring flavonoids for cancer prevention. He says, flavonoids are amongst the common molecules present in a variety of foods — citrus fruits, leafy vegetables, roots, tubers and bulbs, herbs and spices,

best potential of lowering the incidence of colon cancer, while increased stool bulk through intake of bran, cereal fibre, vegetables and regular exercise lowers the risk of breast cancer," Prof Chatterjee says.

"Terrestrial plants have acquired antioxidant defences against oxidative damage to macromolecules. These defences depend on certain elements (e.g. selenium) and the synthesis of complex molecules (e.g. Vitamins 'A', 'C' and 'E'). Not surprisingly, many of these micronutrients have become, as a result of natural selection, the passive antioxidant defence of animals which eat these plants. Human metabolism and the molecular machinery of our cells should therefore function optimally with a diet high in antioxidants."

UK govt to punish MPs who took illegal bribes

LONDON, June 8: British members of parliament who accept illegal bribes could face up to seven years in jail under proposals to be announced next week by the government, it was disclosed today, reports AFP.

Home Secretary Jack Straw will confirm that minister will bring in legislation to make MPs subject for the first time to the criminal law on bribery, as part of Labour's campaign to "clean up" parliament.

The corruption issue was seen as one of the major factors that lost the Conservatives the general election on May 11 with several Tory MPs facing unresolved allegations of "leakage" and many exposed for sex scandals over the course of the last parliament.