

Yadav under intense pressure to quit

NEW DELHI, June 24: Opinion was building up Tuesday against a powerful politician in India's governing party who has refused to quit after being indicted in a burgeoning theft case, reports AP.

Laloo Prasad Yadav, who is the president of the Janata Dal party has refused to resign as chief minister of the northern state of Bihar until he is convicted by a court.

Yadav and 55 others — mostly government officials — were indicted on Monday by the federal police in a dlr 138 million theft case popularly called the fodder scam. All of them have denied any wrongdoing.

The Central Bureau of Investigation charged Yadav and others with conspiracy, breach of trust, using forged documents and dereliction of duty.

Yadav is the chief of the Janata Dal, one of the 13 parties that make up the governing United Front coalition of Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral.

Yadav and others are accused of siphoning an estimated 4.8 billion rupees from the state

government's animal husbandry department intended to buy fodder for cattle on state-run farms. The alleged crime occurred in the 1980s and 1990s.

The federal police presented the charges in the court of Judge SK Lal in Patna, 850 kilometres (525 miles) east of New Delhi.

Monday night, Gujral told a cable television channel that Yadav should quit. "We must have some sort of norms in public behavior," Gujral said.

Several leaders of the Janata Dal have urged Yadav to quit and avoid splitting the party. But Yadav has said repeatedly refused to do so. Instead, he has said that he will continue to run his administration from jail if he is arrested.

Security has been increased in Patna because Yadav's arrest could lead to large-scale violence by his supporters. Police have not yet arrested Yadav. He also has sought anticipatory bail in court in case he is arrested. A judge is likely to give him his ruling Tuesday.

Tensions surface between US, Euro allies at Earth Summit+5

UNITED NATIONS, June 24: World leaders opened the Earth Summit Monday amid dire warnings about environmental catastrophe, while the United States shrugged off its leadership role, reports AP.

Tensions between the United States and its European allies surfaced over the US refusal to agree to specific goals and deadlines to stop climate warming during the just-ended Denver Summit in Colorado.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair launched a veiled attack against US environmental policy as his new Labour government sought to lead the Earth Summit II and boost its international standing.

Speeches on the first day of the UN summit, called to review progress since the 1992 Rio environment conference, were also marked by tough statements by developing countries demanding an increase in Official Development Aid (ODA) which since Rio had declined to a 25-year low.

Delegates remained pessimistic about agreement on global measures despite a num-

ber of initiatives by individual countries, including a joint one by Brazil, Germany, Singapore and South Africa which failed to galvanise the summit.

US chief Kofi Annan struck a dramatic tone at the conference opening when he said that "Failure to act now could damage our planet irreversibly, unleashing a spiral of increased hunger, deprivation, disease and squalor."

"Ultimately, we could face the destabilising effects of conflict over vital natural resources."

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook also warned that the environment would become the key issue in foreign relations as disputes arise over diminishing resources such as fish stocks and water.

French President Jacques Chirac offered to host a Paris conference on fresh water resources at the beginning of next year, reminding the other 60 heads of state and government present that water supplies were becoming scarcer and more polluted.

With US President Bill Clinton only scheduled to ad-

dress the summit on Thursday, Vice-President Al Gore made short welcoming remarks in which he pointed to the rise in "Greenhouse gases" and dramatic loss of forests saying "We must reverse these trends."

But like Clinton at Denver, Gore declined to announce any concrete measures, although noting that a Kyoto conference in December presented a "Critical opportunity" to decide on legally-binding caps on carbon dioxide emissions.

European delegations jumped into the vacuum, and the British foreign secretary told a news conference, "We want to take the lead in the environmental debate."

Blair touted Britain's complaint with the voluntary caps set in Rio.

"We did deliver on the greenhouse gas emission targets," he told the 60 world leaders gathered to assess the results from Rio. "Some other countries cannot say the same, including some of the great industrialised nations."

And though he fell short of naming names, he added: "The biggest responsibility falls on

those countries with the biggest emissions."

The United States is the biggest emitter of carbon dioxide, the primary cause of global warming which is threatening island nations with rising tides and topping the list of environmental concerns here.

Rio called on developed nations to cap carbon dioxide levels at 1990 levels before the year 2000. The 15-nation European Union wants a 15 per cent cut below 1990 levels by 2010.

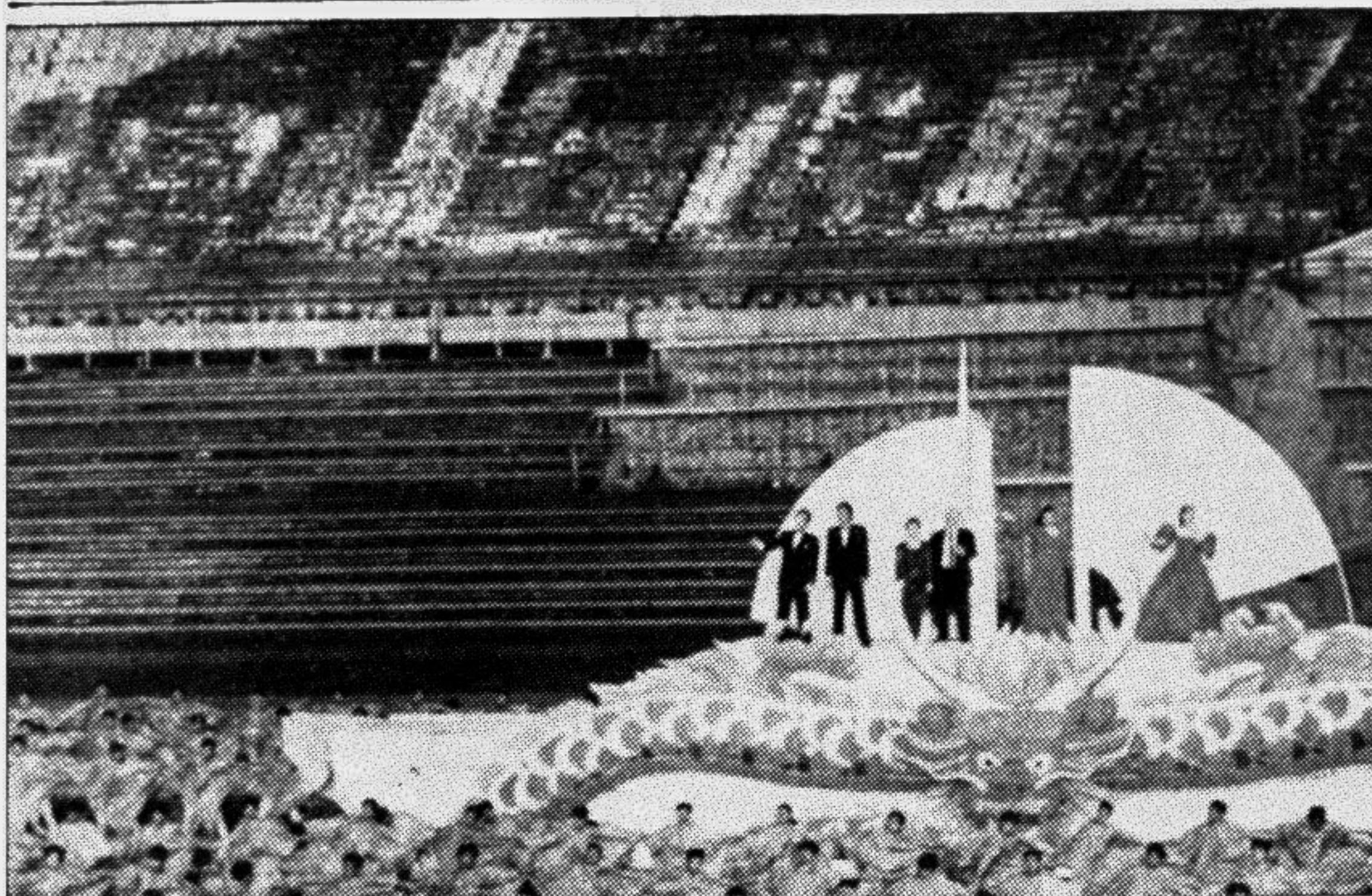
Among other initiatives announced on Monday, Japan specifically took to heart the criticisms of the developing countries and pledged to transfer more financial and technological resources to the South.

Speaking for the 15-nation European Union, Netherlands Prime Minister Wim Kok said that "The European Union re-confirms the commitments it undertook in Rio de Janeiro."

"We will do our best at least to stop the downward trend in development assistance and we will do our utmost to reverse this trend, in order to reach the 0.7 ODA target."



Diana, Princess of Wales arrives at Christies New York with Christie's Chairman Lord Charles Hindlip, late on Monday to attend a private preview of her dresses, which are due to be auctioned in aid of charity at Christie today. — AFP/UNB photo



Chinese entertainers render the specially-composed Hong Kong handover song with the backdrop of the territory's night skyline formed by hundreds of participants during a full-dress rehearsal on Monday for the handover celebration to be held on the evening of July 1 at the Workers' stadium in Beijing. The grand two-hour show will be attended by the top Chinese leadership headed by President Jiang Zemin. — AFP/UNB photo

Lawsuits mounting against Pak govt for deporting Kanshi

ISLAMABAD, June 24: Lawsuits against the government of Pakistan were mounting Tuesday as more people went to court to protest the extradition of the man accused of shooting two CIA employees, reports AP.

An opposition politician, the former director of Pakistan's spy agency and the Pakistan Institute of Human Rights all have filed suits against the government of Pakistan alleging it broke its own laws when it extradited Mir Aimal Kanshi to the United States last week.

Kanshi was picked up in clandestine raid on a hotel in Pakistan, whisked off in a helicopter to the federal capital of Islamabad where he was apparently transferred to a C-130 for the trip to the United States.

Kanshi is being held without bail in Fairfax County, Virginia, near the CIA headquarters where he allegedly shot two employees in January 1993.

The third and latest lawsuit was filed on Monday in the Lahore High Court by Javid Iqbal

Jafree, on behalf the Pakistan Institute of Human Rights.

Hamid Gul, the former director of Pakistan's spy agency and a one-time close ally of the CIA, particularly during the 1980s Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, filed a suit earlier.

Gul is arguing that "the national conscience has been jolted. Pakistan's sovereignty has been challenged."

An opposition politician in Kanshi's home province of Baluchistan also has filed a suit and several other organisations and political parties are threatening to go to court.

Meanwhile, the government of Pakistan is staying quiet.

Mushahid Hussein, the Information Minister, in a brief statement issued last weekend said "there was no question of any deal, between the US and Pakistan."

However, he added that "as far as Pakistan is concerned, our priorities are clear. We do not give protection to any per-

son alleged to be involved in terrorism since this can only be hurting the interest of Pakistan."

The government has been attacked daily on the front pages and editorial pages of the national newspapers since Kanshi's arrest became public one week ago.

"The implications of the Kanshi affair are profoundly disturbing for Pakistan and the Pakistani public," said a recent editorial in the independent daily newspaper, The News.

"The Kanshi case has brought to the fore troubling questions about national dignity, self-respect, the rule of law and, above all, national sovereignty," the editorial said.

Right-wing religious parties have accused Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's conservative government of selling out to the Americans, already considered a meddler in Pakistan's internal affair by many in this Islamic nation of 140 million people.

Netanyahu may survive no-confidence

JERUSALEM, June 24: Israel's opposition leader said Monday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would probably survive a parliament no-confidence vote this week, but emerged weakened by the growing rebellion in his ranks, reports AP.

"I don't think it is realistic that we will topple the government, but it is clear Netanyahu will become weaker and weaker in terms of his moral authority," said Labour Party leader Ehud Barak.

Tuesday's no-confidence vote comes at a time of growing malaise over Netanyahu's performance during a first year in office marked by repeated scandals, social tensions, a freeze in

peace talks with the Arabs and a severe economic slowdown.

Weekend polls showed former military chief Barak, who was elected Labor leader last month, would win elections. In one poll by the Dahaf Institute, Barak led Netanyahu by a whopping 51-26 per cent. No sample size or error margin was given.

Labour and its ally Meretz submitted the no-confidence motions over Netanyahu's handling of a dispute over economic policy that led to last week's resignation of Finance Minister Dan Meridor.

The widely respected Meridor claimed Netanyahu had fabricated the dispute over currency liberalisation to force

him from office, and said he no longer had faith in the prime minister.

Communications Minister Limor Livnat then bowed out as the Cabinet's liaison to parliament, saying she could not defend Netanyahu because she was not kept informed of his policies.

David Reem, a legislator from Netanyahu's Likud, said he would abstain Tuesday and expected up to five others to do the same.

Under Israel's new electoral system, the opposition needs an absolute majority of 61 lawmakers to vote against the government in order to bring Netanyahu down.

Nepal's ruling coalition in fragile condition

Deepak Gajurel writes from Kathmandu

With Parliament set to meet in two days, the question being debated in political circles is whether the three-month-old coalition government of Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand will survive this session.

While political analysts here are not willing to immediately write off the ruling coalition of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxists and Leninists (CPN-UML), Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and the Nepal Sadbhawana Party (NSP), they feel the stability of the government will be under constant threat during the coming session.

The RPP, with 20 seats in the Lower House of Parliament, holds the key in Nepali politics. Neither the opposition Nepali Congress (NC) nor the UML will be in a position to form a government without in RPP, which has been switching loyalties since the 1994 general election that threw up a hung Parliament.

The resignation of Foreign Minister and RPP strongman

Prakash Chandra Lohani early this month has brought into the open the differences between the UML and RPP.

Dr Lohani resigned, alleging that the UML had misused state power and resorted to fraud during the recent local body elections. Dr Lohani is not alone in the RPP in charging the UML with fraud. Two other RPP Cabinet ministers have also expressed dissatisfaction with the coalition partner.

Such accusations against the UML have come from the other coalition partner NSP as well, with a party leader and Cabinet minister threatening to quit the coalition if the UML does not change its attitude.

A more significant difference cropped up between the two major ruling partners last week when Deputy Prime Minister Bam Dev Gautam, a senior UML leader, and Finance Minister Rabin Nath Sharma, a senior RPP member, could not agree on the kind of budget the government should make.

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Off the Record

Di regrets

LONDON: After a scolding in the tabloid press, Princess Diana apologised on Monday for taking her sons to the movie "The Devil's Own," about the IRA, reports AP.

The princess, who reportedly persuaded theater staff to let underage Prince Harry see the movie, said she had been unaware the film was about the Irish Republican Army.

Harry, 12, and his brother William, who turned 15 on Saturday, went to see the movie with their mother on Sunday at a theater near their Kensington Palace home.

The film, starring Harrison Ford and Brad Pitt, was licensed for audiences age 15 and over. Some critics have said it glamorises the IRA.

"Diana, Princess of Wales, was unaware of the subject matter of the film 'The Devil's Own,' which she saw yesterday with Princes William and Harry," a statement from her office said.

"She apologises for any distress which may have been caused by her taking her sons to see this film," the statement said.

"There is a certain amount of irony in all of this," The Sun newspaper quoted an unidentified aide to the princess' ex-husband, Prince Charles, as saying.

Burglary for marriage

CAIRO: A man who ran a ring of child burglars in the northern Egyptian city of Alexandria told police who arrested him that he needed the money so his daughter could get married, Al-Ahram newspaper said on Monday, reports AFP.

The burglar chief, who was not identified, would use a blow torch to make an opening in paint stores' iron curtains large enough for the children to enter, the paper said.

They would then steal cans of paint.

The man made 50,000 Egyptian pounds (14,600 dollars) from the ring.

When police arrested him Sunday, he said he committed the theft to get the money for his daughter's trousseau.

Bound for glimpse of history

HONG KONG: A lucky few lost themselves in the oblivion of sleep, huddled with thin blankets in their seats. Others were immersed in movies and videos. A few stared into space, reports AP.

Packed for 14 hours into a Boeing-737, hurtling east from Los Angeles to Hong Kong, most of them were anxious to catch a glimpse of history.

Hong Kong's July 1 return to Chinese rule not only marks an end of an era but is also a major tourist attraction expected to draw 1.2 million foreign visitors.

"I've been looking forward to this so long," said Marilyn Benesch, 54, a legal assistant from Phoenix, Arizona, who was aboard the flight.

Evening gowns packed in her luggage, Benesch is ready for the balls and parties to celebrate the change of sovereignty.

"I'm just going to pack as much as I can into 15 days," she said.



Director of Mattel France, Robert Gerson (R) holds a Barbie doll, as a model dressed in one of Barbie's renowned outfits looks on, during a fashion show organised to celebrate the billionth doll to come out of Mattel's factory, Monday, in Paris. — AFP/UNB photo

Cambodia to hold elections in May '98

PHNOM PENH, Cambodian, June 24: The Cambodian government has agreed to hold the country's next national elections in May 1998, First Prime Minister Norodom Ranariddh said Tuesday, reports AP.

The country's two prime ministers agreed to set a firm date for the upcoming polls at the urging of leaders of the eight industrialised nations — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States.

The leaders, who met for a summit that concluded Sunday in Denver, also expressed concern over political instability in Cambodia.

10,000 children orphaned in Kashmir violence in 8 yrs

Surinder Oberoi writes from Srinagar

Children have been the worst victims of the separatist violence in Kashmir with nearly 10,000 having been orphaned in the eight-year-long insurgency and their number is growing by the day.

Children born in the days of turmoil are showing behavioural changes that are a cause of worry for their parents and guardians, who feel it might lead to dilution of the age-old Kashmiri cultural, social and moral values.

Muzamil Jallil, a Kashmiri sociologist working on a fellowship with The Times of India newspaper, said, "My research reveals that there are more than 10,000 orphans in Kashmir." Their numbers are

increasing with separatist violence still claiming an average of six lives a day.

As part of a private research project by a group of mass media students, nearly 300 children in Kashmir were provided a questionnaire prepared by a child psychologist. It threw up some interesting findings about the state of the child in the post-militancy era.

The research found that 69 per cent of the children preferred to play with toy guns as compared to dolls or other games. Nearly 90 per cent of the children in the 8-16 age group said "We have seen the dead body of a militant or a civilian riddled with bullets."

Mushtaq Magroob, a top

psychiatrist, said, "A random study of 1,140 psychiatric disorder cases three years ago showed that 272 (of these) related to children suffering from traumatic stress disorder."

"Kashmiri children are stuttering and stammering...and these problems have their roots in emotional tensions, insecurity and fear psychosis which is the outcome of the violence," Magroob said.

It showed that only 12 per cent of the boys knew what a cinema theatre was. All cinema theatres, liquor shops and beauty parlours have been banned in Kashmir by the separatists since 1989. Nearly 80 per cent of the children have no idea of night wedding celebra-

tions or night club parties— which were a routine before 1989.

A majority of the school-going children do not remember their schools having ever organised celebrations like the annual day, parents' day celebration or sports day. No school has celebrated any of these since militancy came to the Valley in 1989.

Education has been badly hit in the last eight years, when hundreds of schools were burned down while others functioned hardly four to five months a year because of strikes and closures ordered by the militants.

"The lack of co-curricular activities in militancy-hit

Kashmir has led the new breed of children to an extreme directionless situation," Prof. Munawar Syed, a psychologist, told India Abroad News Service. He called the situation "alarming."

"No research on this problem has been conducted officially by the government, but there is an alarming increase in the number of orphans in Kashmir," said an official in the state's social welfare department.

Most of the affected children interviewed said they had to work to feed their families. Arshad Ahmed, 12, has been working as a helper on a bus for a salary of Rs. 400 (\$11) a month to sustain his family after his

father was killed in a crossfire between the security forces and the militants three years ago.

"We have not received any help from the government or any other voluntary organisation," Ahmed's mother said.

"The children of Tahir Arif (a militant who died in an encounter with the Indian Army two years ago) are now working in a tea shop and have not received any help from any quarter," a close relative said.

Officials admit that the government was providing hardly any help for child victims of the insurgency. There are no private orphanages in Kashmir

Mobutu's top aides arrested

KINSHASA, Congo, June 24: Ousted dictator Mobutu Sese Seko's top aides face arrest for fraud and corruption under new President Laurent Kabila, according to radio reports Monday, reports AP.

The head of Mobutu's political party, Kithima Bin Ramazani, was among the first to be targeted, according to the broadcast from Kabila's stronghold of Bukavu in eastern Congo. Arrests reportedly had already begun, but it was not immediately clear whether Ramazani was in custody.

Mobutu has been in exile in Morocco since May, when Kabila's fighters took the capital of the country formerly known as Zaire.

— India Abroad News Service