

# Albright to urge Arafat to crack down on militants

RAMALLAH, West Bank, Sept 11: After raising Palestinian ire with strong statements in support of Israel, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is expected to press Yasser Arafat to crackdown on Islamic militants, reports AP.

Beginning her Middle East visit Wednesday, Albright consoled Israeli victims of the recent suicide bombings and said a Palestinian crackdown on the groups behind the attacks was needed.

But she also told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a three-hour meeting that peacemaking required mutual give and take.

Albright is to meet with Arafat on Thursday in the West Bank city of Ramallah, then meet again with Netanyahu.

Albright's first trip to the region as Secretary of State comes after a six-month Israeli-Palestinian crisis in relations which security experts — and Israel's opposition leader — warn has brought them to the brink of violent confrontation.

Angry at Israel's settlement-building, Arafat has refused to crackdown on Islamic militants. Israel has frozen implementation of past accords, in-

cluding further land transfers, until he does.

A senior State Department official, speaking anonymously, said Albright advised Netanyahu to open the borders to Palestinian workers and release the frozen tax repayments to the Palestinian Authority, arguing this would help Arafat fight the terrorists.

Israeli radio reports said Netanyahu and Albright agreed Arafat must make the first step, but Netanyahu hinted that he might then stop "unilateral actions," a term used to refer to Israeli settlements.

At the start of her drive to salvage the peace process, Albright supported Israel's anxieties about terrorism that has claimed 176 civilians and 67 soldiers since the Oslo accord was signed four years ago.

"We are with you in the battle against terror," she said.

"We are with you in your insistence that the Palestinian Authority fulfill the responsibilities and obligations that it has undertaken."

Palestinian officials complained she went too far, fearing Israel's security concerns will dominate the agenda at the expense of Palestinian claims

that Netanyahu has violated the peace accords.

"If Madeleine Albright is to succeed she must look Netanyahu in the eye and tell him that the peace process can't be put back on while your policies of settlements, confiscation of land, house demolitions and non-compliance with the agreements continues," said chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat.

Palestinian Cabinet minister Hanan Ashrawi said Albright's comments betrayed "a wholeheartedly one-sided approach."

"At some point the United States has to decide whether it wants to serve only Israeli interests or whether it wants to serve the interests of peace in the region."

In the West Bank town of Nablus, about 200 Palestinian women, affiliated with the Islamic militant group Hamas, burned a US flag and a poster depicting Albright stabbing the Palestinian people.

The Palestinians maintain the perpetrators of the two recent suicide bombings in Jerusalem — which killed 20 Israelis and the five assailants — came from abroad.



Three soldiers stand at attention before the body of Mother Teresa, which is draped in the Indian national flag, Thursday at St. Thomas's Church in Calcutta. Considered a living saint by many throughout the world, the Roman Catholic Nobel laureate will receive a full state funeral, an honour normally reserved for presidents and prime ministers. — AFP/UNB photo

# India honours Teresa draping nat'l flag over her body

CALCUTTA, Sept 11: The Indian state began its tribute to Mother Teresa Thursday draping a large Indian flag over her body as it lay in state in a Calcutta church, reports AP.

The brief ceremony was an odd mixture of the religious and the military.

About 100 nuns of Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity order, in their blue and white sares, murmured a prayer, barely audible above the hums of the air-conditioning, as the soldiers gathered.

Six officers — two brigadiers and four generals — marched into St. Thomas' Church with the large flag, turned smartly before the body and raised the flag over their heads. Then they advanced slowly, positioned the saffron, white and green banner. It was lowered and folded neatly, so as to leave her feet and face exposed.

A general, a brigadier and a colonel then took up positions behind the body. Three high-ranking officers will keep a vigil there continuously until Mother Teresa's body is taken for the funeral on Saturday.

"She belongs to the country now," said Dr Patricia Aunbul, Mother Teresa's personal physician. Dr Aunbul flew in from California last night to attend the services.

After the brief ceremony,

that lasted five minutes, the nuns sang a hymn in Bengali. The words were "Our lady I praise you, I thank you. The melody sounded like a lullaby."

The soldiers who formed the honor guard at the church included 15 Nepalese Gurkhas. Military Police officers stood guard at secretary of state, will head the papal delegation to the funeral. Officials had earlier said the pope would be represented by Cardinal D Simon Lourdasamy of India.

Of the pope, D'Souza said, "I'm sure his heart is very much with us in Calcutta."

D'Souza also defended the decision to bury Mother Teresa at her Missionaries of Charity headquarters, instead of in a place more accessible to the public.

AFP adds, the city council on Wednesday said it will operate additional metro trains for mourners to reach the funeral route of Mother Teresa on Saturday.

Twenty-two special trains will operate from the Calcutta suburbs of Dum Dum to the city centre on Saturday when the Nobel laureate's body will be taken in a military procession for a state funeral.

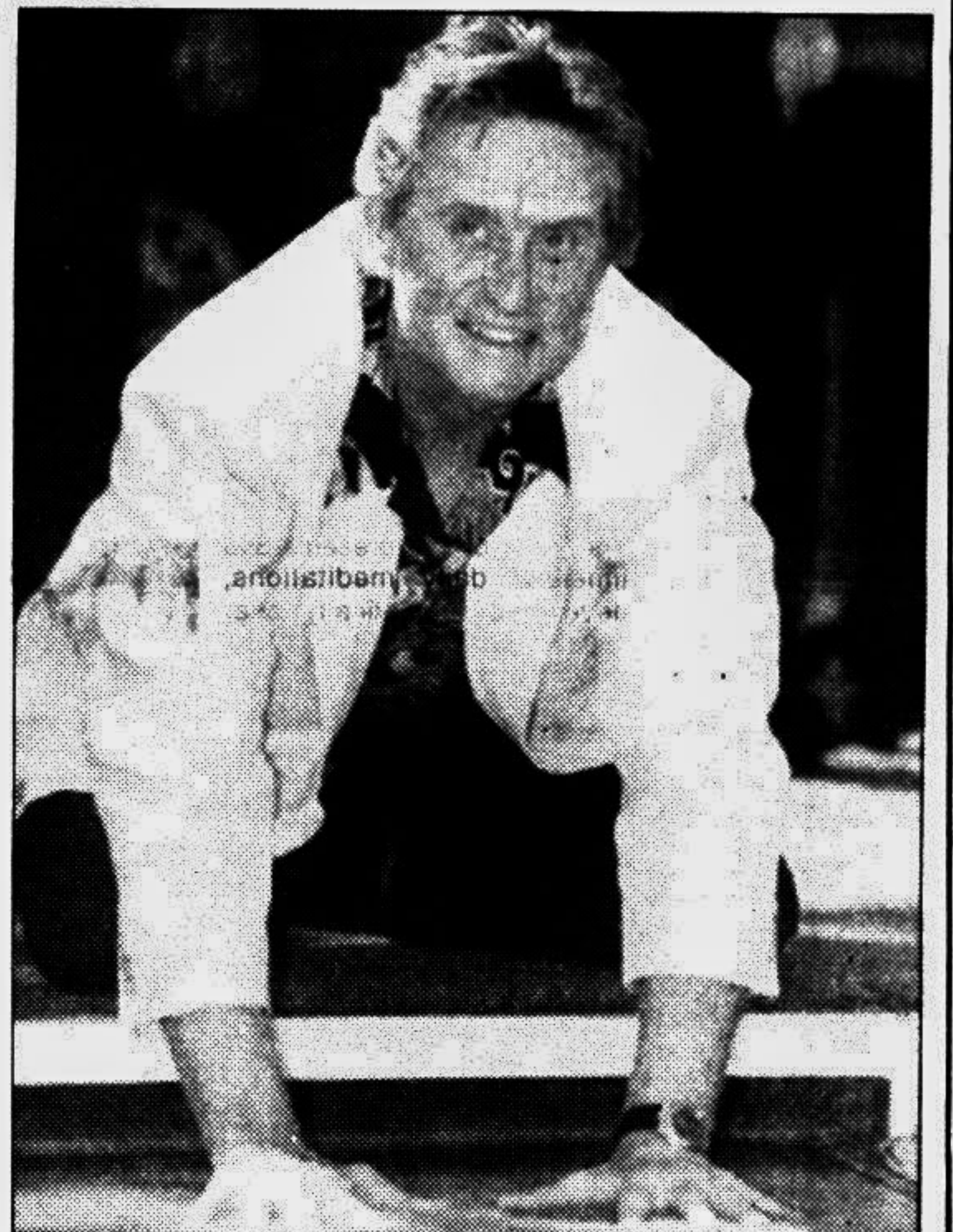
More than one million people are expected to witness the procession, which will end in a private burial in Mother House.

## BRIEFLY

### Another NZ minister resigns:

The second cabinet minister to resign in three weeks stepped down Thursday, citing frustration over "macho male" political attitudes and "double standards" on the government's part. AP reports from Wellington.

Christine Fletcher's decision to remain as a backbench legislator means there is no threat to the stability of the coalition government. Prime Minister Jim Bolger said after the resignation was announced. Bolger's coalition of his National Party and the small New Zealand First Party holds a one-seat majority in Parliament.



Academy Award winning actor Michael Douglas places his hands in cement during a ceremony honouring him at the world-famous Chinese Theatre Wednesday in Hollywood, California. Douglas is the first second "generation" movie star to be honoured with the hand and foot print ceremony, following his father Kirk Douglas' ceremony in 1962. — AFP/UNB photo

### Bus mishap kills 20 in India:

A packed bus plunged into a rain-swollen canal in eastern India, killing at least 20 people, police said yesterday. Reuter reports from Bhopal.

Up to 50 people were feared to have died in the accident on Wednesday evening in Raigarh district, about 700 km (400 miles) east of Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh State, a senior police officer in Bhopal told Reuters.

### Road mishap kills 11 in US:

Eleven people — most of them returning to Los Angeles after a day of selling corn — were killed in the fiery head-on crash of a packed van and a pickup on scenic California highway, AP reports from Los Angeles.

"I haven't seen anything this horrendous", California Highway Patrol Officer Jim Everly said Wednesday. Tuesday night's collision left wreckage burning for hours and victims and ears of corn strewn across Highway 1 between Lompoc and Santa Barbara, about 130 miles (208 kilometres) northwest of Los Angeles.

## Earl Spencer: Unlikely rebel for monarchy's reforms

LONDON, Sept 11: As a godson of Queen Elizabeth II and head of a family with old royal links, Princess Diana's brother is an unlikely rebel, reports AP.

With an emotional backdrop at his sister's funeral, however, the 9th Earl Spencer seized the banner of the "people's princess" who felt battered by the media and royalty.

He condemned Diana's tormentors in the media as inhabiting "the opposite end of the moral spectrum" from her, chided the royal family for revoking Diana's "Her Royal Highness" title, and promised to protect her sons from the Windsor's tradition-bound stuffiness.

For a moment, his comments left the gathering of mourners silent. Then applause by the masses outside swelled to the doors of Westminster Abbey and rippled up through the pews.

The one-time television journalist succeeded in doing

## Pak MP arrested for violating court order

KARACHI, Sept 11: A special anti-corruption judge Wednesday ordered the arrest of Jam Mashooq Ali, a ruling party MP, after he ignored his bail conditions and travelled abroad, court sources said, reports AFP.

Ali, who was elected in February on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) Party ticket, is facing charges of illegally handing out prime industrial plots to his four best friends when he was in Industry Ministry in 1990.

Ali is the first PML deputy arrested here since Sharif's eight-month old government launched a drive against administrative corruption.

## Scots vote on new parliament

EDINBURGH, Scotland, Sept 11: With promises of greater autonomy and muffled warnings of disaster, Scots vote Thursday on whether to have their own parliament, marking the first big job in their 290-year union with England, reports AP.

Prime Minister Tony Blair's Labour government, locked in an uneasy alliance with independence-seeking nationalists, appeared certain of getting a "yes" vote for the proposed Scottish Parliament from most of the nearly 4 million voters.

But polls indicated support wasn't as strong for giving tax-raising powers to the 129-member Edinburgh body.

Thursday's referendum culminated years of growing demands for a Scottish Parliament which Britain's Conservative Party, deeply unpopular north of border, helped stoke in office and have apparently failed to defuse since losing power on May 1.

## US, DPRK officials end 2nd round of talks

BEIJING, Sept 11: The United States top North Korea expert held last-minute talks Thursday with North Korean officials to secure the communist country's participation in peace talks, reports AP.

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Charles Kartman left Beijing immediately after the meeting and without commenting on the results of his two days of talks with North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan.

US Embassy officials refused to divulge the contents or outcome of the meetings. North Korean Embassy officials were not available for comment.

## Babri Mosque demolition case Cong, Janata Dal, Muslim leaders hail Lucknow court's decision

NEW DELHI, Sept 11: The Congress, Janata Dal and Muslim leaders yesterday welcomed a designated court's decision yesterday to frame charges against several persons including top BJP leaders in the Ayodhya mosque demolition case and said it expected the guilty to be punished, reports PTI.

The Congress spokesman, VN Gadgil, told newsmen today that Tuesday's court decision had given hope that at long last some action was being taken in respect of the "crime of the century."

He said some of those involved were defending, justifying and glorifying the demolition of the Babri Mosque and some of them glorified during, before and after the destruction of the mosque.

After the demolition there was no regret or apology. To a question whether it would be proper for Kalyan Singh, one of the accused in the case, to be allowed to become chief minister as part of agreement with the BSP later this month, Gadgil said what would happen after September 21 would depend on internal contradictions between BJP and BSP.

Meanwhile, the Janata Dal

today hailed the court decision on demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya saying that judiciary is doing its best to safeguard secularism in the country.

The party's parliamentary board chairman and union minister, Ram Vilas Paswan, and senior Dal leader, Obaidullah Khan Azmi, told newsmen here so long as the courts are active, the communal forces will not get a chance to flourish.

They said the structure was demolished by communal forces and the court had done the right thing by trying to unmask those responsible for the incident. "The decision will boost the morale of secular forces."

A trial court in Lucknow had decided to frame charges against 49 persons, including the Shiv Sena leader, Bal Thackeray and senior BJP leaders, LK Advani and Kalyan Singh in connection with the demolition on September 9.

Asked if the court decision would have a bearing on the transfer of power by the Bahujan Samaj Party to the BJP in Uttar Pradesh later this month, Paswan said he does not consider BSP as a secular party. "Otherwise it would not have

joined hands with BJP for the sake of power even after the demolition," he said and described the alliance as "opportunistic."

Another report says, various Muslim leaders yesterday welcomed the decision of the special designated court of Lucknow to frame charges against 49 people, including Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray, BJP president LK Advani and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Kalyan Singh, in cases relating to the demolition of 'Babri Masjid' in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992.

The president of All India Babri Masjid Rebuilding Committee (AIBMRC), Mohd Yunus Siddiqui, in a statement here yesterday said the Muslim community has full faith in Indian Constitution, law and judiciary and urged the special designated court to hear *Shah Ram Janmabhadr* Babri Masjid case on day-to-day basis.

Shahi Imam of Shahi Masjid Fatehpuri, Maulana Dr Mufti Mohammad Mukarram Ahmed said the court's decision is a sign of justice and hoped that the matter will be decided soon.

## Omar asks Tajikistan to return 5 jets Taliban, opponents fight for airport near Mazar-e-Sharif

KABUL, Sept 11: The Taliban religious army and opposition forces battled Thursday for control of the airport near the opposition stronghold of Mazar-e-Sharif in the third day of fighting for the northern Afghan city, reports AP.

The fall of Mazar-e-Sharif would deal a devastating blow to the alliance fighting the Taliban, who have threatened the city for the first time since they were forced out in May. The Taliban already control the southern two-thirds of Afghanistan.

Both sides claimed to control the airport, but aid workers said they believed it was still in the hands of the opposition. The airport is eight kilometres (five miles) east of Mazar.

"The fighting is outside the airport," said Jawad, an opposition spokesman who like many Afghans uses one name. "But the airport is still under our control."

He said the Taliban controlled hills about a kilometre (mile) away from the airport. Both sides were firing artillery

and some of the forces were fighting hand to hand, he said by telephone.

Another opposition spokesman reached by telephone said the fighting was within 10 kilometres (six miles) of the airport. He spoke only on condition of anonymity.

Earlier this week, the Taliban captured a key town on the main highway to Mazar-e-Sharif, then briefly seized the airport on Tuesday. They were driven back, but still control the road. Fighting to the west of Mazar-e-Sharif cut the only other road into the city, isolating the stronghold from forces elsewhere.

The Taliban have demanded that foreigners, including aid agencies, leave the city. But Amir Khan Muttaqi, a Taliban spokesman, said Thursday there was no way out.

The Taliban use an airport in Kunduz to supply their forces fighting near Mazar-e-Sharif, 300 kilometres (185 miles) northwest of Kabul, the Afghan capital.

AFP adds from Islamabad: The supreme leader of Taliban movement Mulla Mohammad Omar called on Tajikistan Wednesday to return immediately five Afghan jets which were flown abroad to escape fighting, Afghan sources said.

In a statement from his southwestern Kandahar Base, Omar also warned the Tajikistan government not to allow its soil to be used for Afghan opposition action against the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban, the private Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

He said the jets flew into the neighbouring country amid Tuesday's advances by his militia towards the opposition stronghold of Mazar-e-Sharif.

The orders to fly into Tajikistan were given by ethnic Uzbek warlord General Abdul Malik whose whereabouts were not known.

In a bid to avoid their seizure by Taliban forces, Malik had ordered eight jets parked at Sheberghan Base in northern Afghanistan to escape.

## US smoothens way to Clinton-Gujral summit

RALEIGH, North Carolina, Sept 11: The Clinton Administration seems to be going out of its way to soothe India ahead of talks later this month between President Clinton and Prime Minister I.K. Gujral, according to India Abroad News Service.

A senior State Department official said that President Clinton's meeting with Gujral and Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on the same day in New York on September 22 is not an indication that Washington presumes an equivalency between New Delhi and Islamabad.

Apparently in an effort to assuage India's angst over the years that the US always seemed to lump India with Pakistan instead of recognising India on its own merits as it does China, the official said Mr. Clinton's meeting with the two prime ministers does not mean "there is an equivalency."

The official, George Pickart, the second senior most official in the South Asia bureau after Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs Rick Inderfurth, said the U.S. did not view India and Pakistan "as a grouping; that we have to always deal with one when we do with the other."

Undersecretary Pickart, who was speaking at a panel discus-

sion on Indo-US relations held here as part of the 14th annual convention of the Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE), noted: "Rather, we are going to see them individually and on the merits of them and in their own rights."

Pickart's remarks were only the latest in a deliberate effort by the administration to go out of its way to recognise India for the regional and emerging global power that it is, instead of as in the past to lump it with Pakistan in the balance of power equation in the subcontinent.

"In the U.S.," he said, "Americans will have to take the time and need to know that India is not just a counterpart or reciprocal of a mirror image of Pakistan. Or the corollary of that notion that South Asia is a zero-sum game between India and Pakistan."

He said Americans have also to "come to understand that South Asia is not a region on the brink of nuclear war. We split the nuclear weapons capabilities of India and Pakistan."

Pickart said, "Americans have got to understand that India is not only a pre-eminent regional power but that India "is more than just a South Asia player."

## Public standing of royals damaged over Di's death

LONDON, Sept 11: Around half the Britons questioned in a poll published Thursday said they thought the public standing of the royal family had been damaged over the death of Princess Diana, reports AP.

The Gallup think the events of the past 10 days have increased the public standing or done damage to the public standing of the queen and the royal family?

The poll reported 53 per cent said their standing had been damaged. The poll was based on 1,004 telephone interviews Tuesday and Wednesday. Margin of error for a poll this size is plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

Initial refusal by Buckingham Palace aides to break protocol and fly the national flag half-staff at the palace as a sign of royal mourning for Diana struck many Britons grieving her death as cold and unfeeling. The palace later relented over the flag.

Diana, Dodi Fayed and their driver died when their car crashed in Paris on August 31 while being pursued by news photographers.

The public silence of Queen Elizabeth II following her former daughter-in-law's death

also upset grieving Britons. Diana and the Queen's son Prince Charles divorced last year.

The Queen only decided to speak to the nation after headlines appeared in several London newspapers on September 4 urging her to. She went on television on September 5, saying "I share in your determination to cherish her memory."

The queen and other royals were at Balmoral Castle in Scotland when Diana died. The Queen's decision to stay there until September 5 instead of returning to London immediately also upset many.

Gallup said 71 per cent of poll participants agreed with the proposition that "The monarchy and the royal family should continue to exist but should become more democratic and approachable, rather like the monarchy and royal family in Holland."

It said only 11 per cent agreed with the proposition that "The monarchy should be abolished and replaced by a non-executive figurehead president like the ones they have in some (European) continental countries."



Bosnian Muslims pray during a pre-election rally of the main Bosnian coalition "Koalicija" in Tuzla as a woman carries a portrait of one of the local candidates Wednesday. Local elections in Bosnia are due to take place 13-14 September under the supervision of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). — AFP/UNB photo

## 14 troops killed as fighting continues in N Lanka

COLOMBO, Sept 11: Heavy fighting raged in northern Sri Lanka Thursday as government troops began an assault to cut off the biggest town held by Tamil rebels, military officials said, reports AP.

At least 14 soldiers were killed and 164 wounded in the fighting that erupted on Wednesday, said officials on condition of anonymity. The rebel casualties were not immediately known.

Supported by tanks, artillery and helicopter gunships, the soldiers headed toward Odduchuddan, 255 kilometres (160 miles) northeast of Colombo, the officials said.

The rebels fought back with rockets, field guns and machine gunfire.

The new line of attack appeared to be aimed at isolating the rebel-controlled city of Mullaithivu, 20 kilometres (10 miles) further east.

The rebels are fighting for a separate homeland for Tamils, who account for 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 18 million people.

tary already has wrested control of four other roads leading to Mullaithivu.

Nearly 20,000 government troops have been trying since May to capture the main 70-kilometre (45-mile) highway that would provide a land access to northern Jaffna Peninsula, now reachable only by air or sea.

But fierce rebel resistance has stalled the advance. Until now, the troops have captured about one-quarter of the highway, and the military says more than 600 soldiers and 2,000 guerillas have been killed.

In May 1996, the government took control of the Jaffna Peninsula after a bloody battle that cost 2,500 lives on both sides, but the highway to Jaffna remains in rebel hands.

The government has been sending supplies to its troops and half a million civilians in Jaffna by air and sea.