Newspapers predict tall of Gujral

# India's minority govt comes under attack from key ally

NEW DELHI, Sept 28: India's fragile minority government came under attack on Saturday from a key ally which has been keeping it in power since April,

reports AFP. But the Congress (I) Party said it has no immediate plans to withdraw it crucial parliamentary backing from the

United Front government. Following a meeting of the party's executive here, Congress issued a statement saying the government of Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral appeared to be drifting aimlessly.

"The present political environment, where the Indian state appears to have been reduced to a rudderless ship, is disturbing," the party said in its statement. "No basic problem can be solved in a situation like

"The Congress cannot allow the situation to drift further, and urges the United Front government to take appropriate measures to discharge its responsibility of governing the "The picture is not at all en-

couraging. The Congress said the government's performance in the economic sphere was poor and it had failed to tackle the deteriorating law and order situa-

The party said it was clear the coalition governments could never succeed in India. But Congress spokesman Vithal Gadgil said his party had no plans to topple Gujral's centre-left multi-party govern-

"There is no question of withdrawal of our support," Gadgil said. "There is also no time-frame for continuing our support."

The Congress, India's oldest political party, propped up the United Front government for the first time in June 1996 after nationwide elections left a hung parliament. It withdraw support to that

government in March after alleging that then premier H D Deve Gowda had insulted the Congress. But Congress failed to set up a coalition of its own.

The Congress resumed support to the United Front after Deve Gowda was replaced by the Congress-friendly inder Kumar Guiral as Prime Minister.

The United Front has only around 180 seats in the 545member federal parliament. The Congress has some 140 seats and the Hindu nationalists some 160. The United Front government would fall without Congress support.

AP adds: Indian newspaper predicted the imminent fall of the government Sunday after the powerful Congress Party accused the ruling coalition of reducing the country to a "rudder-

In a resolution issued late end of the UF government." Saturday after a four-hour The Indian Express newspaper added that members of the meeting of its working committee, the Congress Party cited United Front were alarmed by separatist unrest in several rethe resolution's strong wording.

#### Assassination bid on 2 leading Indian politicians

NEW DELHI, Sept 28: Two prominent Indian politicians on Saturday survived an assassination attempt when gunmen fired at their cars in the northeastern state of Nagaland, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said reports AFP.

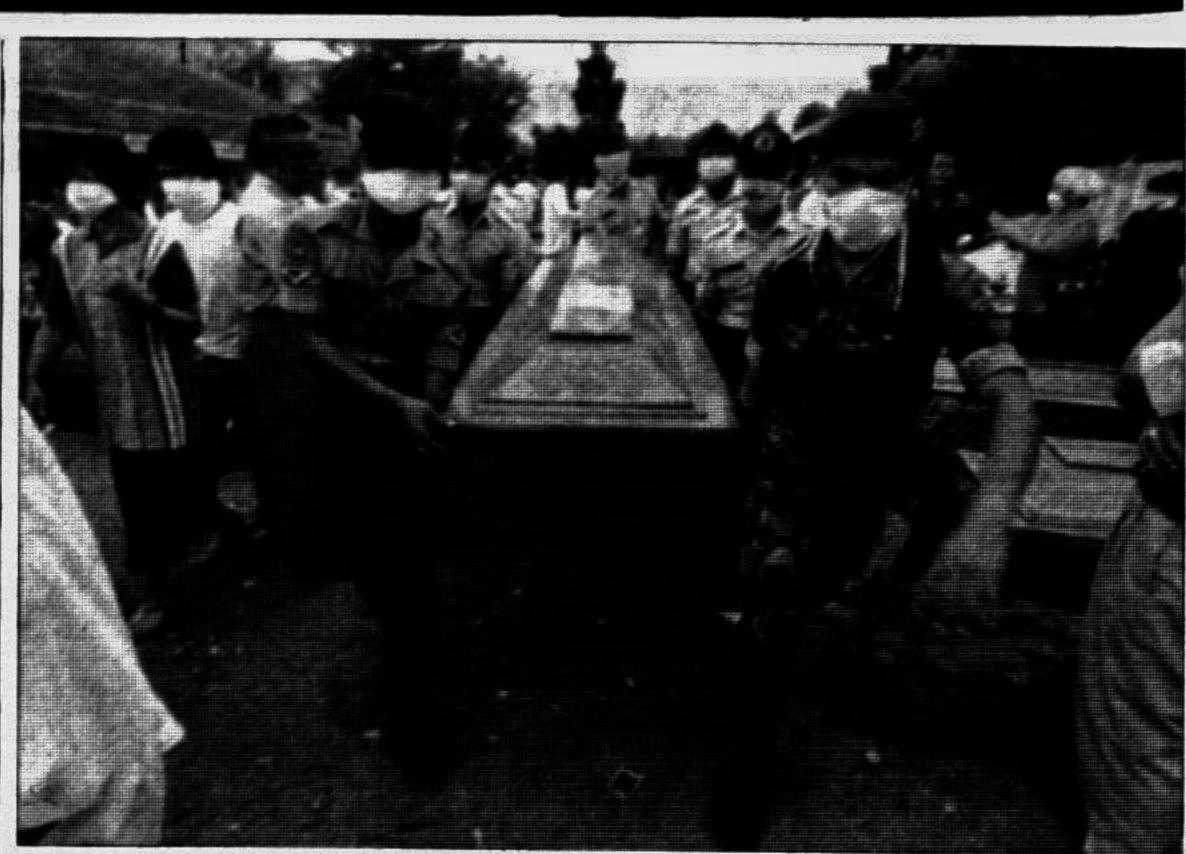
The attackers fired from automatic rifles at a car carrying Nagaland Chief Minister SC Jamir and former Federal Minister Rajesh Pilot near the state capital Kohima, the news agency said.

The car was not hit, however, and no one was hurt. The convoy of some 20 cars

accelerated after the shots rang out on a national highway and reached the nearby town of Dimapur, PTI said. Both Jamir and Pilot belong

to the Congress (I) Party, which was voted out of power in India last year, Pilot is known to have acted as a mediator between New Delhi and insurgents in Nagaland.

Indian security forces declared a three month truce on August 1 against separatist guerillas in Nagaland, a Christian-majority state which borders Myanmar, the guerillas have been fighting for almost 50 years.



Wearing surgical masks to shield themselves from the stench, Indonesian rescue workers carry a coffin containing the body of an air crash victim at a hospital in Medan, northern Sumatra, 1,400 kilometres (870 miles) northwest of Jakarta, Sunday. Relatives of victims of Friday's Garuda Airbus crash, which investigators are trying to determine if it was caused by the thick haze, were able to fly to Medan to identify the bodies of their loved ones when the airport opened on Sunday. Two hundred and thirty-four people were killed in the crash. - AP/UNB photo

## Lanka to hold cabinet meet today to finalise power sharing plan

COLOMBO, Sept 28: Sri Lanka is to hold a crucial cabinet meeting tomorrow to discuss a radical plan aimed at ending the Tamil separatist war amid mounting opposition from majority Buddhist leaders, officials said, reports AFP.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga called the special meeting to finalise a radical power-sharing plan that is due to be sent to parliament before the annual budget is presented on November 5, officials said

"The president will be looking for a unanimous endorsement from the cabinet for her devaluation proposals at tomorrow's meeting," a government officials said. "This is going to be a very important

The move comes amid rising opposition from the Sinhala Buddhist community against the proposals to turn the country into a de facto federal state.

The influential Buddhist leadership on Saturday also lambasted media minister Mangala Samaraweera and demanded that he immediately withdraw comments that the

Buddhists were fostering ethnic bloodshed by blocking peace

A chorus of Buddhist organisations led by the chief priests of the country's three main sects asked Samaraweera to apologise to the clergy over his statement made Thursday at a weekly press conference.

Samaraweera said that a self-appointed panel of the Sinhala Buddhist community opposed the government's power sharing move and that it helped the country's top Tamil Tiger guerilla Velupillai Prabhakaran and arms dealers.

The council of Buddhist clergy in a statement said they wanted an apology within 48 hours or else they will take "stronger action" to force the minister to take back his allegation about the panel known as the "Sinhala Commission."

The monks were also planning a demonstration to protest the remarks of Samaraweera who is also a member of the Sinhalese Buddhist community, a spokesman for the Buddhist organisations said. "The Sinhala Commission is

the biggest conspiracy against the Sinhalescopie of this

country," Samaraweera said. The only person happy about it is Prabhakaran, arms dealers and those who love to see blood.

> Last week the panel called for agitation against the government's reform plan to share power with minority Tamils in a bid to end the Tamil separatist war which has claimed over 50,000 lives since 1972.

Asian diplomats saw the Sinhala Commission report as a fresh challenge for Kumaratunga because the Buddhist clergy has considered influence in rural areas where 80 per cent of the country's popuation live.

The informal "Sinhala Commission" which has no legal status had been meeting for several months receiving evidence of discrimination against the majority Sinhalese community since independence from Britain in 1948.

"The effect of the devolution package would be not to convert Sri Lanka even into a normal type federal state but a very special federal state, the like of which does not exist anywhere else, the panel seperted M .80

### Di's mother draws strength from mourning crowds

OBAN, Scotland, Sept 28: Princess Diana's mother says she drew strength from the crowds that brought flowers and lit candles in mourning for her daughter, and later felt peace when she by herself to the grave, reports AP.

gions of India and a slowdown

in economic growth, and com-

plained that the Hindu nation-

alist Bharatiya Janata Party

"Governance of a country of

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ity cannot be discharged casu-

ally," the resolution said. "The

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resolution was meant as a

warning to the United Front.

but did not signal and end to the

party's support of Prime Minis-

ter Inder Kumar Guiral's 14-

party coalition. But the Times

of India reported Sunday that

Congress Party insiders were

predicting "the beginning of the

Congress officials said the

derless ship is disturbing."

gious tension.

"I spent hours during the nights in the grounds of Kensington Palace witnessing thousands of people so thoughtfully choosing where to put their flowers and light their candles. seeing tears pouring down the faces of people of every age and race and creed," Frances Shand Kydd said Saturday at a memorial service for her daughter at St Columba's Roman Catholic cathedral in Oban, Scotland. About 500 people attended

"The hugs I was given and so many people saying to me "thank you for giving us Diana and thank you for being with us tonight". "I felt indescribable comfort in a warm protective mantle," she said.

the service.

Mrs Shand Kydd said she initially rejected an invitation from her son Charles, Earl Spencer, to visit Diana's grave in a lake island at the family estate. E But later that morning

walking in the gardens I was drawn to the lake. The boat looked overwhelmingly tempting, so I rowed myself across to the island.

"I felt certain that my beloved Diana was at peace and I was peaceful too," she said. Mrs Shand Kydd had di-

vorced Diana's father in 1969, and there has been much speculation in the press about the relationship between mother and daughter.

"Such pieces made us both wince, but also gave us joy that we often met in many different places without anyone ever knowing. A sense of joy that we did it and no-one ever knew." Mrs Shand Kydd said. "I recall with great pleasure

her telephone calls from all over the world at all times of day and night, hearing so often her very ready sense of humour and me feeling that she was mine.

"For years before Diana's death, and indeed since she has died, I have had frequent requests from the media to speak about Diana. I felt I was being asked for my soul which can't be given since it belongs to someone else.

### Israeli housing plans criticised

## Palestinians stage protests in West Bank, Gaza Strip

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip, Sept 28: Palestinians scuffled with police and burned US and Israeli flags during demonstrations to protest plans for continued building in Jewish enclaves near Palestinian zones. reports AP.

There were reports that Israeli troops used live ammunition to repel protesters, but the government denied those reports, saying only rubber bullets were used.

The demonstration Saturday also marked the first anniversary of several days of violent riots that left nearly 80 people dead after Israeli authorities opened a new entrance to a tunnel near one of Islam's most sacred shrines in Jerusalem.

But anger over the settlement issue appeared to be the main impetus for the demonstrations, organised by Arafat's Fatah faction. The unrest, which included

the burning in effigy of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. followed his announcement last week that he would con-

tinue building Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, brushing off US demands for a settlement freeze.

Saturday, Palestinian leaders criticised the Israeli plans. Hana Ashrawi, a Palestinian Cabinet minister, said

tually lead to further conflict and further violence." Netanyahu announced Thursday he would build 300 more homes in the West Bank

struction. build to accommodate the settlement's natural growth. How-

ever, government critics say Neand tax breaks.

Gush Katif in southern Gaza, more than 100 Palestinian policemen formed a human chain

scene of some of the worst of the

Outside the settlement of

tunnel riots one year ago.

to block hundreds of protesters who chanted, "We will die for Palestine" and scuffled with po-The protesters burned US

and Israeli flags and a Netanyahu effigy with several youths leaping through the flames Near the Kfar Darom settle-

ment in central Gaza, Palestinians hurled stones at Israeli border police, who fired on Palestinian reporters at the

scene said the troops used live ammunition, and the nearby Deir Balah clinic said a 17year-old Palestinian had been hit by gunfire. He was slightly wounded in the leg. Israel radio, however, said

rubber bullets were used, and the army said it did not know of any of its troops using live ammunitio

China tests new missile: China's air force has successfully tested a new surface-to-air missile designed to hit long-range targets, the Liberation Army Daily reported Sunday, AP reports from Beijing.

The newspaper, the official organ of the People's Liberation Army, gave few details on the missile beyond saying it was equipped with special anti-interference technology.

Strong quake claims 7 in Indonesia: Seven people were killed and 21 hospitalised after an earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6 struck the Indonesian island of Sulawesi Sunday, officials and police said, AP reports from Jakarta.

The Meteorological and Geophysics Agency said the quake was centered 20 kilometres (12 miles) north of the coastal town of Pare Pare in South Solawesi province. Seismologists recorded it at 8:30 am (0130 GMT). The official Antara news agency said 50 houses were damaged in Pare Pare. 1,400 kilometres (870 miles) northeast of the capital, Jakarta. Witnesses said the quake shook the town for about five seconds.

5 more weeklies suspended in Jordan: Jordan has suspended five more weekly newspapers amid an international outcry that the temporary closures restrict press freedoms, AP reports from Amman.

The suspensions raise to 13 the number of newspapers shut this week, an official said. Samir Mutawe, a state minister for information, said Saturday that the weeklies were served suspension notices because they failed to observe the press code that required them to raise their capital 20 times to 300,000 dinars (dlrs 430,000). Although Mutawe declined to reveal the

Small plane crash kills 2 in NZ: Passengers aboard a tourist train watched in horror as a tigermoth aircraft crashed and burst into flames alongside them killing the pilot and a passenger, reports said yesterday.

number of papers suspended. A government official said five

weeklies were served notices Friday.

AFP says from Auckland. Police had hoped a video taken by an Australian tourist on the train would help determine the cause of the crash, but the footage went blank just before the tragedy, Radio New Zealand reported. The light plane went down on Saturday afternoon in a rural area about 40 kilometres (25 miles) northwest of Dunedin in the south of the South Island

China completes Shun's statue: China has completed the first large-scale bronze statue commemorating Shun, one of the ancestors of the Chinese nation, in Jina, capital of east China's Shandong province, Xinhua reports from Jinan.

A Hong Kong billionaire donated one million yuan (about 125,000 US dollars) to build the 3.5-ton statue in an area of 400 square metres.

#### Zimbabwean shipment of mortar bombs for Lankan army missing

COLOMBO, Sept 28: After a silence of nearly three months, official confirmation has finally been given that a consignment of 32,400 mortar bombs ordered from Zimbabwe by the Sri Lankan Army, has gone missing, reports Xinhua.

Local press reports said today that the missing bombs had fallen into the hands of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) An independent Zimbab-

wean newspaper, the Financial Gazette, on Thursday quoted Tshinga Dube, head of the government-owned Zimbabwe Defence Industries (ZDI) as saying the 81-mm mortar rounds had disappeared at sea after the cargo vessel carrying them left for Colombo on July 2, the local press said.

### India launches new satellite

BANGALORE, India, Sept 28: India began a 53-hour countdown on Saturday for its biggest satellite rocket launch ever from home soil, officials said. reports AFP.

The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) is scheduled to blast off at 10:20 am (0450 GMT) on Monday from the space centre at Sriharikota in the country's south carrying with it a 1,200 kilogramme (2,640 pound) indigenous satellite into space.

Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral will be on hand to watch the take off, which heralds a new era of commercial space launches by India. The event will be telecast nationwide.

YANGON, Sept 28: In the Restoration Council and repeating calls for negotiations to rebiggest meeting of the democratic opposition in years, Nostore democracy. bel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's

NLD renews appeal for

talks with SLORC

"Current ills can be cured only by face-to-face dialogue party renewed an appeal Sunday for dialogue with the milibetween the SLORC and the tary regime but reserved the NLD, which has the right to right to name its own deleganominate its own representation, reports AP. tives," the report said.

After more than a year of The National League for severely curtailing Suu Kyi's po-Democracy is wary that an aplitical activities, the governparent recent softening by the ment allowed party officials to government may be aimed at meet at her lakeside home this splitting and weakening the weekend in a congress marking party, and Suu Kyi urged supthe ninth anniversary of the porters when they met Saturday NLD's founding. to strive for unity.

Dozens of people were turned The NLD central executive away after the number allowed committee submitted a report to in approached 750. Some were the 700 supporters gathered at taken by trucks outside of town Suu Kyi's lakeside home Sunday and let off, apparently to make denouncing repression by the it more difficult for them to reruling State Law and Order



Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto delivers an opening speech in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) economic meeting in Makuhari, suburban Tokyo, - AP/UNB photo

#### HK legislature endorses new election law

HONG KONG, Sept 28: Hong Kong's China-appointed provisional legislature overwhelmingly endorsed a new election law today that curtails democracy in the former British colony, reports Reuter. The bill which will set out

next May's Legislative Council poll arrangements was approved 29-9 with 11 abstentions early this morning after an 18hour debate. Under the new law 30 of 60 seats in the legislature will be

returned by 30 business and professional groups known as "functional constituencies," which effectively means voting by companies. Some two million people

who voted in this category, in the last election in 1995 will lose their vote, with only 200,000 people eligible to participate.

### US Red Cross chief vows to carry Di's fight to ban landmines

LONDON, Sept 28: American Red Cross president Elizabeth Dole has vowed to carry on Princess Diana's fight to ban landmines, reports Reuter.

"I'm determined to find a way to keep alive and carry to fruition the concerns especially with landmines that she was so passionate about," she told the London Sunday Times.

Mrs Dole, wife of failed Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole, said: "I'll be speaking out, we'll be raising money wherever we can to help the victims of landmines."

"In a series of statements

Netanyahu was "willfully creating a situation that would even-

settlement of Efrat, despite Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's recent call for a "timeout" in such settlement con-The Netanyahu government has argued it must continue to

tanyahu is luring Israelis to settlements with generous grants The clashes in the Gaza Strip broke out near Israeli settle-

ments, in areas that were the

Search for Indonesian jet's 'black box' going on

MEDAN, Indonesia, Sept 28: Rescue workers today searched for the flight recorder of the Airbus that crashed in Indonesia's worst-ever air disaster, as grieving relatives arrived in Medan to help identify the victims, reports Reuter.

An air force official said the remains of the 222 passengers and 12 crew had been removed from the wreckage of the A-300-B4 jet that smashed into a hill plantation 45 km (30 miles) south of Medan on a flight from Jakarta on Friday. "So far, only 59 people have

been identified," said the officer, who asked not to be further identified. "A search is still underway

in the area for the Black Box (flight recorder)," he said.

Medan was blanketed by smog today as the special Garuda Airline Boeing 747-200 flight arrived with about 200 relatives of crash victims shortly after dawn.

The remains of those aboard

the plane when it crashed, broke up and burned in a steep ravine at the banana and coconut plantation were taken to the Adam Malik Hospital in Medan, the capital of north Sumatra. The victims were laid in

wooden coffins covered with black plastic in the hospital parking lot. In many cases, relatives

sought to identify loved ones from pieces of clothing. Many wore surgical masks against the smell in Medan's humid heat.

### 'China has history of 10,000 yrs of civilisation'

HAIKOU, Sept 28: China has a history of 10,000 years of civilisation rather than 5,000 years, some historians have announced, reports Xinhua. China's historical frame-

work was built around "the historical records" written by Sima Qian, a famous historian of the First Century BC but now, 2,000 years later, there have been new discoveries in archaeology, anthropology, and folklore, giving ancient history a different look, according to historians from both sides of the Taiwan Straits attending a recent seminar on Chinese history in Hainan province.

Shi Shi, 75, a famous Chinese historian, said: "Sima Qian, who was restricted by limited historical materials

and knowledge, built an ancient historical framework that was not quite in accordance with historical reality," and offers some proposals for a new Chi-

nese historical framework. The Chinese nation has a history of 10,000 years rather than 5,000 years, he said and archaeological studies have proven that Chinese civilisation originated at least 9,000 years ago long before Huang Di. who is commonly recognised as the earliest ancestor of the Chinese nation.

He said that the origins of Chinese civilisation are not Monistic, but Pluralistic, and that it was not a single farming nation and that the Huanghe River Valley is not the only birthplace of the civilisation.

# US denial to mediate on Kashmir setback for Pakistan

would not mediate on Kashmir, Pakistani efforts to bring it up at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Edinburgh next month has received

a setback, according to diplo-"But we will not be surprised if subtle, indirect pressures continue to be exerted," one Indian

official here told IANS. Pakistan has routinely used the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), held every two years, as a platform to raise the Kashmir issue. Its plea is always turned down on the ground that bilateral issues are not discussed at CHOGM.

Coming a month after the meetings between U.S. President Bill Clinton and the Prime Ministers of India and Pakthe new Labour government.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair is expected to hold a meeting with Prime Minister IK Gujral and also meet his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif in the course of the Commonwealth summit from October 23 to 27.

The British are expected to strongly back the U.S. push for a decision on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), officials said. President Clinton had said in his address to the 52nd UN General Assembly that he would like "to enter the CTBT into force as soon as possible." He spoke even of a CTBT "this

lier that Britain "would like" to see India sign the CTBT. The

CHOGM.

Gujral has said clearly that "we are not going to sign the CTBT" in its present form. Indian officials here expect differences to surface over the CTBT at the Commonwealth meet.

Differences are also expected

to surface over Kashmir, though

the US government has stated a

position similar to what the

Labour government has been

not to bring out from the shelves the resolution at the party conference in 1995 which says Labour has a "duty" to intervene in Kashmir to resolve a dispute that arises from its position as "the former imperial

The British position on distant troubles echoes the views expressed by President Clinton who said, "We dare not be complacent or indifferent, trouble in a far corner can become a plague in everyone's house." Officials see this as a veiled reference to a nuclear threat. British Foreign Secretary

Robin Cook said in a foreign

nounced soon after the new government took over: "This is an age of internationalism. We are instant witnesses in our sitting rooms through the medium of television to human tragedy in distant lands, and are therefore obliged to accept moral responsibility for our response."

Indian officials say that the British, like the Americans, are not seeking to play an active role in negotiations between India and Pakistan - for now. "But that is only their current position," an official said. "On principle both governments say they have a right to respond to events anywhere in ways they think fit.

The Indian government is looking for meeting grounds in the economic field to offset differences on the political one.

The British government has announced an official emphasis on economic cooperation at CHOGM this year. India will be represented by Finance Minister P Chidambaram at a meeting of Finance Ministers in London to precede the main meeting.

There will also be a parallel meeting in Edinburgh for nongovernmental organisations, where human rights will be the primary issue on agenda Officials do not expect any

move by Britain to play a direct role in disputes between India and Pakistan. But over the CTBT and again on Kashmir under the garb of human rights. Indian officials are preparing to face a good deal of subtle diplomatic pressure. -India Abroad News Service

#### Atlantis docks with Mir JOHNSON SPACE CENTRE

Texas, Sept 28: The US Space Shuttle Atlantis docked with Russia's Mir space station on Saturday for a controversial exchange of American astronauts, reports Reuter.

The petal-like metalic dock ing ports of the two craft came together in darkness at 3:58 pm EDT (1958 GMT) as they soared 245 miles (392 km) above Central Asia. "We got it, Houston," radioed

Shuttle Commander Jim Wetherbee as a final burst of the Shuttle's manoeuvering rockets nudged the two ships together. "The docking was picture perfect," flight director Paul

Dye said at a news conference in Houston after the docking. NASA's David Wolf, a 41year-old physician-astronaut is to join the Mir crew, replacing British-born astronaut

there since May.

Congressional critics accused NASA of putting astronauts' lives at risk by leaving them aboard the troubled craft. But the space agency said independent safety reviews had given Mir a clean bill of health. "There was a lot of discussion about the risk," Wetherbee

here to tell you, all 10 of us, the benefits far outweigh the risks." The 11-year-old space station has been beset by problems this year, including a serious fire, an orbital collision, life support breakdowns and com-

"I'll have a special present

said after the docking. "We are

for them," Wetherbee said before opening the hatch between the two craft at 5:45 pm EDT (2145 GMT) for the now customary handshakes between US and Russian space crews. The Shuttle skipper greeted

Michael Foale, who has been Mir Commander Anatoly Solovyev with one hand-

puter failures.

#### Sanjay Suri writes from London With the US declaring that it istan, the CHOGM at Edinburgh, Clinton described the CTBT saying of late - that they are policy mission statement an-Scotland, this year has assumed as the "largest sought, hardest willing to offer their good ofadded significance. Host fought prize in the history of fices if both parties want it. country Britain has been workarms control." The Tory gov-The Labour government has ing closely with the US under ernment of former Prime Minat least for the moment chosen ister John Major had said ear-

Labour government is now ex-

pected to push more energeti-

cally in that direction at