

International

United Front won't support Congress to fight BJP in states in next polls: Yadav

BHUBANESWAR, Oct 1: The Janata Dal president, Sharad Yadav yesterday made it clear that the United Front in the next general elections would not join hands with the Congress to fight the BJP in states where the Saffron Party was strong, reports PTI.

Although the United Front government had accepted Congress support to prevent the communal forces from capturing power at the centre, the Front regarded both the Congress and BJP as enemies and viewed them at two sides of the same coin, Yadav told a news conference here at the end of his three-day visit to the state.

While fighting communal forces, which he alleged were endangering the unity and integrity of the country in the

name of religion, "we will also combat the misdeeds of Congress", he said.

Stating that there was no confusion over of government continuing in power with Congress support, Yadav said in a number of states where the Front partners were in power and Congress was the main opposition party, the latter was criticising the government bitterly. "There is nothing called anti-Congressism. It is all part of a rananit (game plan)", he said.

Yadav said the parties comprising the United Front would jointly decide its electoral strategy before the next general elections. Whatever be the decision, it would be a collective arrangement, he said.

He expressed his confidence that the IK Gujral government

would last its full term despite the recent criticism of the functioning of the United Front government made at the Congress Working Committee (CWC).

Yadav said compulsion had been the outcome of the split verdict of the people in the last Lok Sabha elections.

To persistent queries, he refused to comment on the reported statement of the union agriculture minister and CPI leader Chauranjan Mishra challenging Congress to withdraw support instead of issuing empty threats. He also declined to join issue with the former prime minister, HD Deve Gowda's assertion here on Sunday last that acceptance of support from Congress had created confusion in the minds of party's rank and file.

Opposition politicians will be allowed to return to Cambodia: Hun Sen

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 1: Cambodian leader Hun Sen said Tuesday he would let opposition politicians return to Cambodia and permit the United Nations to observe next year's election there, but hinted he may withdraw the offer if his government is denied a UN General Assembly seat, reports AP.

Hun Sen also refused to guarantee that his rival, the deposed co-prime minister, would be immune from prosecution if he returned. Prince Norodom Ranariddh was ousted last July in a bloody coup.

Both Hun Sen and Ranariddh met separately with Secretary-General Kofi Annan to discuss the status of Cambodia's General Assembly seat. The UN credentials committee has delayed a decision on whether to accredit delegations loyal to Hun Sen or Ranariddh during the current General Assembly debate.

After his meeting with Annan, Hun Sen said he agreed to allow the United Nations to organize and guarantee "the safe return" of opposition politicians who fled the country during the July Coup.

"Another issue that we focused on was the preparation for the May 1998 general election in which the United Nations will play a role as a co-ordinator of the observers," he told reporters.

Hun Sen said the UN's Annan how the United Nations could play such a role if the issue of the General Assembly seat — tantamount to international diplomatic recognition — remained unresolved.

He said the issues of the seat and the UN role in the elections were "interrelated."

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70 killed as LTTE launches counter-attack on troops

COLOMBO, Oct 1: Tamil Tiger rebels launched a fierce counter attack on government soldiers trying to capture a strategic town, and the military claimed Wednesday 70 combatants were killed, reports AP.

Nineteen soldiers and 51 rebels were killed during Tuesday's assault near the town of Pulyankulam, said Maj. Kumara Dewege, a military spokesman.

Soldiers found the bodies of 16 rebels, said Dewege. The other casualties were evacuated by the guerrillas.

The rebels attacked with mortars and small arms fire. Troops retaliated effectively, causing heavy casualties among the terrorists, Dewege said in a statement.

The rebels announced over their clandestine radio that they seized the bodies of 13 soldiers but didn't mention their

own casualties.

There could be no independent confirmation of casualty figures since the government does not allow journalists into the war zone.

Pulyankulam's 5,000 residents fled the town when government troops began their latest offensive four months ago.

The soldiers have been trying to capture a 70-kilometres (43 miles) highway through rebel-held territory that could provide overland access to the government-controlled northern Peninsula. They have managed to clear one-fourth of the road link so far.

The peninsula is now accessible only by sea and air.

About 20,000 government troops have laid a siege on Pulyankulam, 235 kilometers (145 miles) north of Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital. But repeated rebel counterattacks have slowed their advance.

It was the fourth apparent assassination attempt against Raduyev this year.

Cross border firing Rescuers look for more bodies in Kashmir

JAMMU, India, Oct 1: Rescuers began clearing debris in an Indian village Wednesday, looking for more victims of shells fired across the border by Pakistani forces in the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir, reports AP.

At least 18 civilians were killed and another 30 wounded in the Pakistani firing that started on Tuesday afternoon and ended after midnight. The shells fell on residential areas in the Indian border town of Kargil, said Col. Shrikrishna Kant, a defense ministry spokesman.

India and Pakistan blamed each other for starting the firing, which resulted in the worst peacetime civilian casualties. Such clashes are common along the border separating countries that have fought three wars since 1947.

State-owned Pakistan Television said the Indian soldiers fired 600 artillery shells into Pakistan, killing three people and injuring seven others.

On Wednesday, Indian rescuers looked for more bodies under the debris. Many civilian homes and some government buildings were damaged in the shelling on Kargil. Thousands of people fled the town in panic.

Russian officials evacuate Chechen capital

MOSCOW, Oct 1: A convoy of Russian government officials evacuated the Chechen capital early Wednesday after Chechnya's vice president ordered them out in a dispute over airspace rights, reports AP.

The convoy of about 20 automobiles left the capital, Grozny, shortly after midnight Moscow time (0800 GMT), Russian news agencies reported.

It was not clear how many officials were in the convoy. The ITAR-Tass news agency said it was headed for the neighbouring republic of Ingushetia.

Vice President Vakha Arsanov had demanded that all Russian government officials leave the republic as of midnight Tuesday unless his delegation was provided an air corridor to fly from Grozny to a meeting in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The convoy departed several hours after an assassination attempt against one of Chechnya's most radical rebel commanders, Salman Raduyev.

Raduyev's car exploded seconds after he entered it around 9 p.m. (0500 GMT) Tuesday evening outside a television station, the Interfax news agency reported. One bodyguard was killed and Raduyev was hospitalised in serious condition, Interfax reported, citing an unidentified Interior Ministry official.

It was the fourth apparent assassination attempt against Raduyev this year.

On the Palestinian side, Albright would like a halt in propaganda attacks on Israel and



Pope John Paul II meets Sister Nirmala, head of the Missionary Sisters of Charity on Tuesday, during an international religious congress at the Vatican. — AP/UNB photo

342 PKK men killed in one week in N-Iraq

ANKARA, Oct 1: Turkish army troops and their Iraqi Kurdish allies have killed 342 separatist Kurdish rebels in one week of military operations inside Iraqi territory, the state-run Anatolia news agency reported Tuesday, reports AP.

Since last week when the army incursion began, 342 PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) members have been killed in action in northern Iraq, a military official told the agency.

The official said the Turkish army had also gained control of

the main PKK military base in the Zab Valley, 20 kilometres (12 miles) south of the Turkish border.

In the Zab area alone, 45 PKK members have been killed, he added.

The official gave no information on casualties on the Turkish side. But the Istanbul-based pro-Kurdish newspaper Gundem, which Tuesday confirmed heavy fighting around Zab, said 20 Turkish soldiers and Iraqi Kurdish allies were killed in the area Monday.

Israeli PM on a collision course with Clinton admn

NEW YORK, Oct 1: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's defiance of a US demand that he suspend settlement construction puts him on a collision course with the Clinton administration. The standoff also threatens the newly revived Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, reports AP.

But if Netanyahu yielded to the American demand, Israel's expansion of Jewish housing on the West Bank and its construction of new Jewish homes in Arab neighborhoods could be halted indefinitely and possibly never resumed.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright bases her call for a "time-out" on the view that peace talks are unlikely to get very far if Israel takes steps that a time-out normally means.

In sports jargon, a time-out is a chance to review strategy, to check a player's injury, to get a drink of water.



A Palestinian policeman at a Palestinian check point near the West Bank town of Nablus trains his rifle in the direction of the Israeli check point during a demonstration with some 200 Palestinians a Tuesday. Many of them women in long Islamic robes and head scarves, marched toward the Israeli army roadblock at the entrance to Assira to protest against the siege, but were held back by Palestinian police. Assira has been under Israeli military blockade for more than a week, with residents barred from leaving and entering.

— AP/UNB photo

'US needs to change entire approach to immigration system'

WASHINGTON, Oct 1: The United States needs to change its entire approach to immigration — right down to the oath foreigners must take to become American citizens, an advisory panel says, reports AP.

"It is time to look at immigration differently," said Shirley M Hufstedler, chairwoman of the US Commission on Immigration Reform.

"Some fear that the diversity brought by immigration will undermine our nation. We think not," said Hufstedler, who was the first secretary of education.

The commission, during a five-year review, has recommended changes from tightening borders against illegal immigrants to setting not just quotas, but also priorities for legal immigration designed to keep

families together and bring skilled workers into the country.

In its final report, released Tuesday, the panel advised Americans to do a better job at helping legal immigrants adjust.

"That means the cultivation of a shared commitment to the American values of liberty, democracy and equal opportunity," said Hufstedler.

Symbolically, the commission recommended a simplification of America's citizenship oath, which now uses such obscure words as "abjure" and "potestate" that can be difficult even for many native English-speakers to understand.

A revision of the oath suggested by commissioners would have new citizens swear that "my sole political fidelity and

allegiance from this day forward is to the United States of America."

More tangibly, the commission said the Immigration and Naturalisation Service should be abolished and its duties split among other government agencies.

Under the proposal, the Justice Department would control the border and remove undocumented immigrants, the State Department would take over the citizenship process and other legal immigration privileges, and the Labour Department would regulate foreign workers.

The agency has too much on its plate — it cannot control our borders, process immigrants and safeguard US citizenship," agreed Rep. Harold Rogers, chairman of a House Appropriations subcommittee that controls the INS budget.

But while some Republicans in Congress have long wanted to replace the INS, President Clinton has his doubts, said White House spokesman Mike McCurry.

"It is not clear exactly how you would take the enormously important task of having safe, legal, orderly immigration, efficiently administered, and then have those tasks dispersed around government. So we'll have to look at that more carefully," McCurry said.

In three previous reports, the commission has recommended new weapons in the fight against illegal immigration, including better border patrols, a national computer registry of legal workers and the cutoff of

most public assistance to illegal immigrants.

Some of those recommendations were passed into law by Congress last year, but the commission has also disagreed with lawmakers — for example, coming out against welfare reforms that have made even legal immigrants ineligible for some public aid.

The report also called for federal start-up grants for cities and states with high immigration rates so they can work with businesses and nonprofit groups to establish local orientation and welcoming programs.

"Every town hall, school, business, church, synagogue, mosque, every foundation, charity and ethnic association... should play an important role in helping newcomers adjust," said Hufstedler.

Latest extract from biography Di's glamour hid her craving for someone

LONDON, Oct 1: Princess Diana's image of sophisticated glamour merely hid her craving for someone to cherish her — a need she finally fulfilled just weeks before her death with Dodi Al Fayed, according to the latest extract from her biography published today, reports AFP.

She told a friend shortly before she died last month: "I adore him (Dodi). I have never been so happy," according to author Andrew Morton's book about the Princess, for which he claims she was the source.

"He won't give her up and I wish him well. I would like to say that to his face one day," she is said to have once told a friend.

The biography extracts told how Diana became close to Blair, with him organising a weekend summit at his official country home, Chequers, after he became premier in May.

As his children played football with Diana's sons outside, Blair talked through with Diana her potential role as an informal ambassador for Britain.

She is said to have remarked later: "I think at last I will have

there for her when she needs him," he added.

She also reportedly endlessly discussed with friends whether Charles would find happiness with Parker Bowles and whether he would have the courage to give up the throne for her.

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someone who will know how to use me."

Morton said Diana gave six interviews through an intermediary — who has not been named — and was the direct source of his book, which exposed her marriage as a sham and shook the monarchy when it was first published in 1992.

He and publisher Michael O'mara are to make a "substantial" donation to land-mine victims from the proceeds of the book, of which a million copies have already been printed worldwide ahead of its publication next Monday.

Diana had campaigned to help those maimed by landmines and to stop production and use of the deadly weapons.

HK marks China's National Day with mixed feelings

HONG KONG, Oct 1: Hong Kong celebrated its first Chinese National Day as part of the motherland on Wednesday with a solemn flag-raising ceremony, to be followed later by parades and fireworks, reports AP.

The holiday meant two days off from work for Hong Kong, which didn't observe National Day officially before July 1, when its 156 years as a British colony came to an end.

Hong Kong's new leader Tung Chee-hwa stood at attention with the territory's other senior officials as a police band played the Chinese anthem and raised China's gold-starred red flag beside Hong Kong's famous harbour. China's senior official in the territory, Ma Yuzhen, also attended.

Tung made no remarks. The simple, early-morning ceremony was watched by a few hundred guests and flag-waving spectators.

Andy Ng, 43, a waiter, said he took his 11-year-old son to watch the ceremony to learn patriotism.

Despite the lack of public enthusiasm, a host of official celebrations were planned. Tung was scheduled to hold a cocktail reception for community leaders in the afternoon. Carnivals, concerts, parades and ball games were planned all over the territory.

A radical pro-democracy organization, the April 5 Action group, said they will stage a protest rally outside the reception to urge people not to forget the 1989 democracy movement in Beijing.

Two planes and four helicopters were to fly past Victoria Harbor carrying a Chinese flag and the Hong Kong flag depicting five petals of the Bauhinia flower.

Clashes leave 20 dead in Kinshasa

KINSHASA, Congo, Oct 1: Mortar fire rocketed back and forth across the Congo River on Tuesday, while Kinshasa went into mourning for 20 people killed in shelling the day before, reports AP.

At least one person was killed and two more were badly wounded Tuesday after mortars were fired from Brazzaville, in the neighbouring Republic of Congo, official Congolese radio said. Later, mortar fire could later be seen being fired from Kinshasa toward Brazzaville.</p