

## NLD puts off planned meet amid tight security in Yangon

YANGON, Nov 4: Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi put off a planned meeting of her National League for Democracy Tuesday, apparently because of tight security measures that suggested that authorities would try to block it, reports AP.

Barbed wire barricades had been seen since early Tuesday along roads leading to her party's office in Tanaw township in eastern Yangon, about five kilometres (three miles) from downtown.

Traffic into the area was allowed, but police had barriers ready at all road junctions and several riot police with shields and batons were seen. No party members were seen around the party branch office.

Traffic was banned as usual from University Avenue, where Suu Kyi lives.

The meeting was cancelled due to circumstances, "a party member said by telephone. But another party official said later that the organisational meeting had been postponed rather than cancelled.

Another branch meeting last week was cancelled under similar circumstances.

The military government

that seized power in 1988 has severely restricted the activities of the National League for Democracy. The party won a landslide victory in a 1990 general election, but the junta refused to allow parliament to convene and cracked down on dissenters.

On October 21, Suu Kyi and other party leaders were permitted to visit the Thaketa township party office without interference. But on October 28 meeting at Mayangon township in northern Yangon was cancelled because the road leading to the party office was blocked.

Party leaders were told to hold the October 28 meeting at Suu Kyi's house instead of at the Mayangon party office. They were allowed to proceed to the party office after three hours waiting at the road junction.

Most of the party members, however, were trucked away by police and released at places away from Yangon. Eight party members were later arrested, party sources said.

Authorities accused the opposition group of deliberately trying to "embarrass the government and to politicise the incident."

## Baghdad turns back UNSCOM for 2nd day

# Annan sending team to defuse tension between UN, Iraq

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 4: Secretary General Kofi Annan is sending a three-man team to Baghdad to "defuse a very tense situation" that has resulted from Iraq's refusal to cooperate with the UN Special Commission overseeing the destruction of Iraqi weapons (UNSCOM) and demand that America weapons inspectors leave the country, a UN spokesman said Monday.

After discussions with Security Council members throughout the weekend, Annan asked three experienced diplomats to go to Baghdad immediately to talk with Iraqi officials.

The Security Council was scheduled to meet in closed session late in the afternoon Monday to review the latest developments and hear a report from UNSCOM Chairman Richard Butler as the confrontation between Iraq and the Security Council escalated with new threats from Iraq.

The team is headed by former Algerian Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN special envoy to Afghanistan, and includes Ambassador Emilio Cardenas, a former Argentine UN envoy, and Jan Eliasson of the Swedish Foreign Ministry and a former UN Ambassador and undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs.

Iraq has notified the UN that it would accept the mission, which is expected to arrive in Baghdad no later than Wednesday.

However, UN officials stressed that the team will not be negotiating new criteria for the weapons inspections. UNSCOM's mandate was laid down in a Security Council resolution at the end of the Gulf War and accepted by Iraq. Under the terms of that resolution (687), UNSCOM is to have full control over its operations and access to all sites in the country.

"There's nothing to negotiate," UN spokesman Fred Eckhard said. "This is a diplomatic effort to defuse a very dangerous situation."

"A number of governments conveyed their concern to Iraq and any sense that the Security Council is divided on this issue has now been dispelled," Eckhard said.

"The next step is up to Iraq and this mission is looking to facilitate that next step," the spokesman said.

The secretary general gave no fixed duration for the mission, Eckhard said.

In a letter to the Security

Council, UNSCOM Chairman Richard Butler described the events of Monday during which the special commission was forced to cancel inspections by biological, chemical and ballistic missile weapons teams when Iraq refused to allow Americans on one of the teams to enter a site.

The inspections were the first since Iraq gave UNSCOM one week to remove all Americans from the country on October 30.

AP adds from Baghdad: Iraq turned back UN weapons inspectors for a second day Tuesday, saying it would not grant access to teams that included Americans.

The move came as UN negotiators rushed to Baghdad in an attempt to defuse the crisis. Iraq has vowed to expel seven American inspectors working with the United Nations by Wednesday. Iraq has accused the Americans of espionage.

All three teams were told they can continue their inspections but without Americans," said Maj. Gen. Nils Carlstrom, the Swedish head of the UN monitoring office in Baghdad. "The heads of the three team cancelled their inspections and returned to the headquarters."

"There was no hostility, no threats, and everything was conducted in a professional manner," Carlstrom said.

He did not say how many Americans were on the teams or which sites the teams were trying to inspect.

On Monday, Iraq told members of a UN missile inspection team that included at least one American that weapons monitors from the United States were no longer allowed to work in Iraq.

The missile team and two other inspection groups that were sent out Monday morning were subsequently called back

to UN headquarters in Baghdad.

### US deploys more jets to enforce no-fly zone

AFP adds: The United States is deploying additional fighter aircraft to beef up its air forces enforcing a no-fly zone over northern Iraq, a Pentagon spokesman said Monday.

### Saddam meets with air force officers

Meanwhile, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein met Monday with the commander and top officers of Iraq's Air Force, the official Iraqi news agency INA reported.

The meeting with the air force officials followed a Cabinet meeting Sunday in which Saddam studied "developments in the political situation and necessary measures for meeting any American imperialist aggression," INA reported.



United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, centre, poses with Emilio Cardenas of Argentina, left, and Lakhdar Brahimi of Algeria at the UN, Monday, in preparation for a trip both men will make to Iraq. Seeking to wrest concessions from the United Nations, Saddam Hussein agreed Monday to let a three-member UN mission visit Iraq to try to defuse the crisis over his plans to expel American arms inspectors. — AP/UNB photo

## ME talks off to slow start US trying to persuade PA to send more negotiators

WASHINGTON, Nov 4: The United States is trying to persuade the Palestinian Authority to send more negotiators to Washington to talk to a large Israeli delegation, State Department spokesman James Rubin said on Monday, reports Reuters.

"They are not here. A significant part of the morning was spent discussing that without them we won't be able to make any progress. That is what they are working on now and trying to get them here," Rubin said at his daily briefing.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and senior Palestinian negotiator Mahmoud Abbas met US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Monday morning, shortly before the time set for the start of the substantive Israeli-Palestinian talks.

But the Palestinians have not set to Washington their experts on what are known as the interim issues — steps Israel agreed to take long ago but has not yet taken.

The secretary is concerned the Palestinian delegation was not in a position to discuss

some of the interim issues related to the airport, the seaport, the industrial park (in Gaza) ... we are trying to fix that," Rubin said.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat said on Sunday he was sending Abbas to meet Levy at the Washington area talks "only because we received an official invitation from Madeleine Albright."

AP adds: A new round of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians got off to a slow start as US mediators complained that the delegation sent by Yasser Arafat lacked expertise in some areas.

State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said experts were needed to discuss setting up a Palestinian airport and seaport, an industrial zone and a corridor for traveling between the West Bank and Gaza.

Arafat apparently intended to underscore that he wanted the talks mediated by Albright and US envoy Dennis Ross to concentrate on his demand for a substantial Israeli pullback on the West Bank.

## Clashes leave 9 dead in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, Nov 4: Nine people were killed in two clashes between government troops and Tamil rebels in northern Sri Lanka as the military prepared to launch a major offensive against the guerrillas, officials said Tuesday, reports AP.

Five soldiers and three rebels were killed Monday when guerrillas fired at a tractor-trailer carrying troops near the town of Puliyankulam in the Vabunaya district, said Major Kumar Dewage, a military spokesman.

Another soldier died and two were wounded when rebels attacked army trucks at Meesalai in Jaffna district on the same day, said Maj. Dewage. The rebels suffered no casualties, he said.

Deputy Defense Minister Anura Kumara Ratwatte said last week that an offensive would be launched soon to defeat the guerrillas after 14 years of war.

Last week, the military replaced its top field commanders to prepare for the offensive.

The rebels are fighting for a homeland for the minority Tamils, claiming they have been discriminated against by the majority Sinhalese. More than 50,000 people have been killed since the war began in 1983.



A model wears a navy satin strapless bustier with a lilac silk faille ballroom skirt Monday, during the presentation of Carolina Herrera's Spring 1998 collection in New York. — AP/UNB photo

## BRIEFLY

**Jiang concludes US tour:** Chinese President Jiang Zemin left Los Angeles Monday bound for Beijing after an eight-day tour of the United States, AFP reports from Los Angeles.

Jiang's trip was aimed at burnishing his image at home while giving Americans a livelier, warmer image of the Chinese leader who, nevertheless, was confronted by human rights questions at nearly every stop. He arrived in the United States on October 26 in Honolulu, Hawaii to a fully military welcome complete with 21-gun salute, with the peak of his visit being a White House state dinner.

**Over 200 escape Brazil jail:** More than 200 inmates escaped from a maximum security prison in southeastern Brazil, apparently with the help of guards, officials said, AP reports from Sao Paulo.

The breakout occurred Sunday night at the Putim Prison in Sao Jose dos Campos, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) northeast of Sao Paulo. Maj. Ailton Ribeiro da Costa, of the local police department, said 208 of the prison's 329 inmates "walked out the front door as if they were going for a stroll."

**Strong quake rocks Chile:** A strong earthquake Monday rocked the same area as a massive and deadly quake two weeks ago. Electricity briefly went out and schools closed, but preliminary reports indicated no casualties or serious damage, authorities said, AP reports from Santiago.

The quake registered a preliminary magnitude of 6.4, according to the head of the government's National Emergency Office, Alberto Maturana. Its epicentre was located 405 kilometres (250 miles) north of Santiago, near the city of Ovalle. The quake was felt across a 700-kilometre swath of Chile's narrow territory, particularly in the same centre-north region where a 6.8-magnitude struck Oct 14. That quake, which caused extensive damage, killed eight people, injured 260 and left thousands homeless.

## Cosmonauts preparing another mission to restore power on Mir

MOSCOW, Nov 4: Fresh from a strenuous six-hour spacewalk, the Mir's crew was busy Tuesday preparing for another mission to restore full power on the battered Russian space station, reports AP.

History's most experienced spacewalker, Mir commander Anatoly Solovoyov, and rookie Pavel Vinogradov removed a bulky old solar panel during Monday's spacewalk and did other work outside the sprawling station.

The cosmonauts worked quickly and efficiently during the spacewalk, despite a problem with Solovoyov's spacesuit which failed to transmit data on oxygen supply and other safety indicators.

The crew has the necessary spares to fix Solovoyov's spacesuit before the next spacewalk, scheduled to start at 3:20 am Thursday (2320 GMT Wednesday), said Vera Medvedkova, a spokeswoman for the Mission Control.

The next spacewalk is to install a replacement solar panel, which is some 30 per cent more effective than the one removed Monday. The panel is stored on the outside of the Mir, and the cosmonauts will unpack the panel and mount it on the Kvant module.

The mission is the final part of a long effort to restore Mir's power supply, cut nearly in half when a cargo ship crashed with the station in June.

If successful, then eight of the Mir's 10 solar panels will be working normally. Another one is operating, but at less than full capacity, and one was damaged beyond repair in the June crash.

The station has had enough energy to carry out normal flight since the first successful repairs in August, but Russian space officials say more powerful scientific experiments.

During the spacewalk Thursday, NASA astronaut David Wolf will operate controls from inside the station as he did during Monday's effort. Wolf is expected to make a spacewalk of his own together with Solovoyov later this month to gather some US scientific experiments.

**Y'slavia, Albania agree to normalise bilateral ties**

BELGRADE, Nov 4: Yugoslavia and Albania have agreed to begin normalising bilateral relations to end almost half a century of tension between the two countries, Belgrade media reported on Monday, says Reuters.

Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and Albanian Prime Minister Fatos Nano reached the accord after talks in Crete, where both were attending a summit of Balkan leaders, Tanjug news agency said.

The president still has not made a decision on Bosnia," said Pentagon spokesman Ken-

## Lok Sabha Speaker seeks criminal charges against UP lawmakers

by Neelesh Misra writes from New Delhi

For the first time since near riot broke out in the Uttar Pradesh state assembly in India, action under criminal law has been sought against the offending lawmakers.

Purno Sangma, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of parliament, told a television network that penal action should be taken against the members to avoid recurrence of such shameful incidents.

"The Speaker must explore the possibility of initiating criminal proceedings against those involved in criminal acts under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) or any other law because members cannot behave like this," Sangma was quoted as saying in an interview.

At least 14 people were seriously injured in the House during the 20-minute rampage, held during a special session on October 21 called to enable Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Chief Minister Kalyan Singh to prove his majority.

Microphones were uprooted and lobbed across the House, chairs were overturned, and the house became the site of an ugly street brawl. The violence was filmed extensively by television networks and relayed worldwide.

After all the microphones on the members' seats had been pulled out, the opposition legis-

lators picked up anything that they could lay their hands on, including flower vases, spittoons, soft-drink bottles which they brought from the lobbies and hurled across at their opponents. Desk-tops were pulled out and used as flying saucers.

"I am shocked that something like this was allowed to happen. It really is unbelievable," Sangma said. "It really is a contempt of the House and should be referred to the privileges committee."

Sangma, a widely respected Speaker who took over last year, himself has not had to face a similar situation in the Lok Sabha but has often voiced his displeasure at the growing disorder in the national parliament and the absence of civilised debates.

Sangma said that the constitution granted immunity to members for speeches and voting inside the House, but they needed to be told that they did not have total immunity. "For all other actions, the members are liable under the law," he said.

The confidence vote was held to enable the chief minister prove his majority in the House after the BJP's coalition partner, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), pulled out of the government. Opposition members from the Congress Party, the BSP and the Janata Dal were

furious because several of their colleagues broke away from their ranks to support Singh. The chief minister won the vote 220-0 in the 425-seat House amid an opposition boycott.

The violence was a repetition, though at a much larger scale, of a similar brawl in the assembly in December 1993 when Defence Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, a former chief minister of the state, faced a similar trial of strength. The motion was then passed amid noise, uproar and violence, and his own party was accused of inciting the violence.

Sangma said he would write to the leaders of all parliamentary parties in the Lok Sabha to ask them to ensure greater discipline in the coming winter session, which begins November 19.

Meanwhile there has been a demand from senior members of the U.P. House to have a special training camp on parliamentary decorum for newly elected lawmakers. Nityanand Swami, chairman of the U.P. Upper House, said a probe ordered by the state assembly Speaker would reveal who had initiated the brawl on October 21 that had given the state, considered the political heart of India, such a bad name.

India Abroad News Service

## Jennie Shipley set to become NZ's 1st woman PM

WELLINGTON, Nov 4: Jenny Shipley, a 45-year-old farmer's wife and former school teacher, is set to become New Zealand's first woman prime minister after winning her conservative party's endorsement Tuesday, reports AP.

The unanimous approval of Shipley on Tuesday by the 44 National Party caucus members completed the 24-hour downfall of Prime Minister Jim Bolger, who steps down at the end of the month.

Shipley won after what some commentators called the most efficient and quietly-planned leadership coup in 20 years.

A formidable worker admired for her ability to manage in all conditions, Shipley is expected to name a reshaped Cabinet shortly, after consultations with her New Zealand First party coalition partner.

## Canada detonates last batch of land mines

TORONTO, Nov 4: With a push of a button — and a swipe at US reticence on the land mine ban — Nobel Peace laureate Jody Williams and Prime Minister Jean Chretien on Monday blew up the last batch of Canada's land mines, reports AP.

The detonation at a weapons testing range outside Ottawa came exactly a month before delegates from about 100 nations are expected in the Canadian capital to sign a sweeping ban on anti-personnel mines.

Williams' remarks were pointedly aimed at a notable holdout, her native United States.

"We have all of NATO except for the US and Turkey. We have all of this hemisphere except the US and Cuba," she said before the ceremony.

## Malaysia, S'pore, Indonesia to fight haze problem jointly

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 4: As the skies darkened over important Malaysian cities, including the capital and town where leaders of developing countries were meeting Tuesday, a regional plan was being contemplated to fight the thick smog, reports AP.

Ships were warned of poor visibility in the Straits of Malacca and parts of the South China Sea for the next two days as weather experts feared the haze could thicken.

## Off the Record

### Tragic!

TOKYO: A 60-year-old Japanese man participating in a sushi-eating contest choked to death after hurriedly downing rolls of rice wrapped in seaweed, police said Tuesday, reports AP.

The man, whose name was withheld by police, was taking part in the event held Monday in Takahata, a rice-growing town 290 kilometres (180 miles) north of Tokyo.

Keiichi Aita, a local police spokesman, said the choking occurred after the man swallowed three vinegared pieces of rice rolled in seaweed one after another. Each roll was 20 centimetres (8 inches) in length and 2 centimetres (0.8 inches) thick, Aita said.

The man was rushed by ambulance to a nearby local hospital, where he was officially pronounced dead, Aita said.

About 50 people participated in the contest, sponsored by the town and a farmers' group to promote the consumption of rice, the official said.

The competition centred on being the first to successfully eat a set amount of the food, a traditional Japanese, and recently international, favorite.

## Because it's a taboo subject in Turkey

ISTANBUL: Turks are lining up for blocks to see the tale of two men who fall in love in a Turkish bath, a film nominated to represent the nation at the 1998 Academy Awards, reports AP.

But "Hamam" won't get a shot at the Oscar: Turkey's Culture Ministry overruled the independent film board, choosing a traditional romantic drama instead.

Although the ministry did not explain its reasoning, critics have charged that the government was put off by the movie's bisexual theme, a married Italian man who falls in love with a Turk.

"Hamam" ("Turkish Bath") is not only about Francesco's love for Mehmet, the young son of his Turkish hosts during a visit to Istanbul.

"It is about lack of communication between husband and wife, missing the train on love, nostalgia for the past — universal themes," said Ferzan Ozpetek, the Turkish director and scriptwriter.

## Jordanians vote for new parliament

AMMAN, Nov 4: Jordanians voted Tuesday for a new parliament that is expected to be dominated by royalist tribal leaders, who will maintain King Hussein's absolute control over this Arab nation, reports AP.

A total of 524 candidates, including 15 women, are contesting 80 seats in Parliament's lower house, the Chamber of Deputies. The Chamber shares its powers with the king and with the upper house, which comprises 40 members hand-picked by the king.

Hussein is ensured a pro-government legislature because Jordan's largest opposition party, the fundamentalist Islamic Action Front, is not contesting the election as a protest of government policies, including its 1994 peace treaty with Israel.

A light drizzle fell over Amman as balloting opened at 7 am (0500 GMT). Counting starts soon after polls close at 7 pm (1700 GMT). Final results are

expected on Wednesday. Hussein introduced political and economic reforms in 1989 when he held the first parliamentary elections since the 1967 Mideast War, which was followed by a state of emergency.

In 1992, he legalized political parties to encourage a multi-party system, but traditional tribal loyalties continue to dominate Jordanian politics.

Elections are not going to help because democracy has been defeated by tribalism," said Sari Nassir, dean of sociology department at the University of Jordan.

At least 300 leaders of Jordan's estimated 500 major tribes are running and are ensured the support of their respective constituents. The re-government constitution party is officially contesting 11 seats and is supporting candidates in 15 others.

Tribal leaders owe allegiance to King Hussein.

## 'Clinton yet to take decision on Bosnia'

WASHINGTON, Nov 4: President Bill Clinton plans to begin exploring US options in Bosnia, including an "extended US military presence, with members of Congress Tuesday, the Pentagon spokesman said Monday, reports AP.

"The president still has not made a decision on Bosnia," said Pentagon spokesman Ken-

## New cabinet formed in Congo

BRAZZAVILLE, Nov 4: Gen. Denis Sassou-Nguesso, the victor of a four-month civil war, has named a new government comprising officials from the regime he ousted and his previous government, reports AP.

Sassou-Nguesso, who was inaugurated president last month, reserved the most powerful ministry — defence — for himself, according to details announced Sunday night on state-run radio.

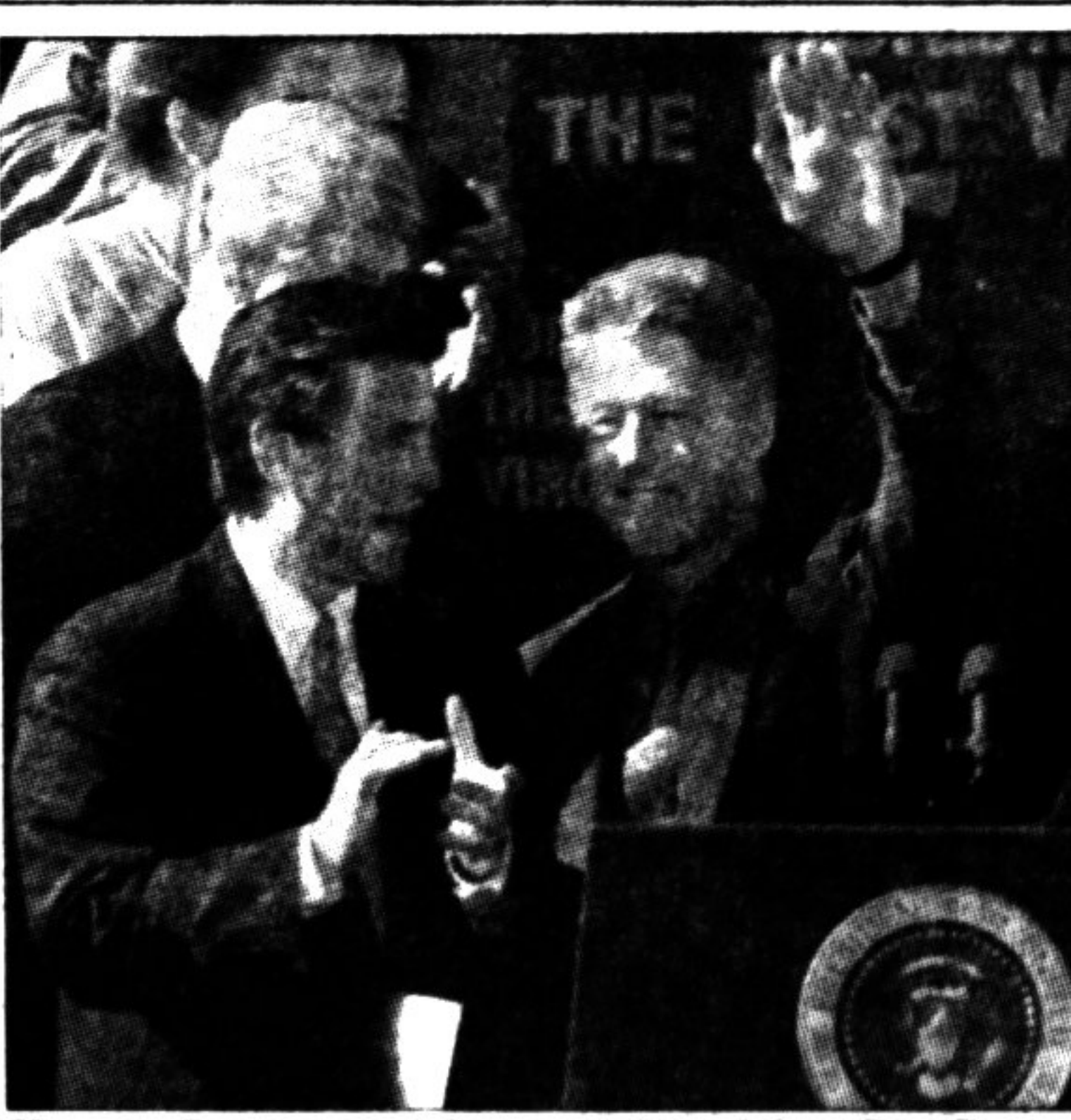
## Chavalit likely to be replaced by ex-Thai PM

BANGKOK, Nov 4: Respected former Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda may replace the current government leader, Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, after his planned resignation later this week, Thai newspapers reported Tuesday, reports AP.

Chavalit said Monday he plans to step down after Parliament ratifies six emergency decrees providing the legal framework for a financial restructuring programme as well as new election laws.

The expected change of prime minister comes during Thailand's worst economic crisis in decades.

Chavalit was expected to offer the post to Prem on Tuesday, the newspaper Bangkok Post reported.



Virginia Democratic gubernatorial candidate Don Beyer applauds President Clinton during a rally for Beyer in Alexandria, Va. Monday, Beyer faces Republican James Gilmore in Tuesday's elections. — AP/UNB photo