

## International

## Confrontation over UN arms inspectors

## UNSC meets today to decide course of action in Iraq

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 9: With new Iraqi threats to shoot at US-manned surveillance planes, a divided Security Council meets Monday to decide how to force Saddam Hussein to back down in the confrontation over UN arms inspections, reports AP.

President Clinton and his national security advisers met this weekend to discuss Iraq's refusal to allow the United Nations teams to inspect weapons sites with American inspectors. The Americans are expected to demand some sort of punitive measures against Iraq, perhaps a ban on foreign travel on selected Iraqi officials.

Iraq, meanwhile, is demanding an end to what it claims is American domination of the UN Security Council, which is responsible for carrying out weapons inspections in Iraq. Tariq Aziz is expected in New York this week to put his government's case personally to the international community. In Baghdad, Aziz told CNN on Saturday that Iraq will fire on

American surveillance planes flying missions for the UN inspection team if those flights go ahead as planned this week.

Saddam's government, in a letter to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, has accused US inspectors of using UNSCOM as a cover for spying on Iraq. The inspectors are trying to determine if Iraq has destroyed mass destruction weapons, the chief condition for the council to lift economic sanctions imposed after Saddam invaded Kuwait in 1990.

After UN envoys failed last week to convince Iraq to cancel its order to expel the Americans, the issue returns Monday to the 15-member Security Council, which is divided over how to cope with the Iraqi challenge.

In Washington, Clinton met with US Ambassador Bill Richardson, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Defence Secretary William Cohen and others to map strategy for Monday's meeting.

White House officials said Clinton instructed Richardson to put the US case forcefully to

the council that Iraq must comply unconditionally with United Nations orders regarding the weapons inspection programme.

One option would be to ask the council to declare Iraq in "material breach" of the 1991 ceasefire which ended the Persian Gulf War. That would open the door to military action.

Such a move now, however, is unlikely to win the support of France, Russia, China, Egypt, Kenya and others on the 15-member council. Iraq has said it is willing to cooperate with the United Nations — its only quarrel is with the Americans.

On Friday, the Americans and the British floated several other proposals, among them an immediate travel ban on Iraqi officials personally responsible for blocking weapons inspections, cancellation of periodic sanctions reviews and tightening controls on Iraqi equipment which would be used for civilian and military purposes.

Cohen also suggested curbs on the amount of humanitarian aid to Iraq. That might include

cutbacks in the UN oil-for-food programme, under which Iraq can sell limited amounts of oil under international supervision to buy food and medicine for its people.

But the programme is popular among governments which oppose policies of the Iraqi government but which also fear political pressure at home from groups which claim sanctions are only harming innocent Iraqi civilians.

President Clinton has called for patience in dealing with Iraq, fearing that strong, unilateral actions too soon will destroy the fragile coalition which has stood against Iraq since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the Persian Gulf War which followed.

It would also throw into turmoil the volatile Middle East at a time when the Arab-Israeli peace process has all but collapsed. Strong US action against Saddam, at a time when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is seen by the Arabs as defying the world, would cost Washington dearly among the Arabs.

## Indian Maharaja wins back ancestral palace after 21 yrs

NEW DELHI, Nov 8: A former Indian Maharaja won back his palace after a 21-year legal battle, reports said Saturday, says AFP.

The Indian Express said a court ordered that Srikantha Datta Wodey, the former prince of the southern province of Mysore and a current Member of Parliament, should be returned his ancestral home.

The court said a government decision to take over the palace, in the southern state of Karnataka, in 1976 was "illegal, arbitrary and an instance of gross misuse of executive power."

India's Maharajas once ruled over around 100 million people across 565 princely states.

Their kingdoms, fostered under the British Raj, were dissolved and incorporated into India after the country's independence in 1947.

Their final financial privileges ended in 1972 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi abolished their privy purses.

The court ruled that, under the Indian Constitution, a person could be deprived of property or rights only through an amendment of law and "not through an executive order of the state government."

Involvement of DMK party in Rajiv murder alleged  
Fragile coalition enters turbulent phase in India

NEW DELHI, Nov 9: India's fragile ruling coalition has entered a turbulent phase following charges that a key government ally helped suspects in the 1991 assassination of former premier Rajiv Gandhi, reports said today, reports AFP.

India Today magazine said leaders of the regional Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party had been accused by an official inquiry probing Rajiv's murder of aiding Sri Lankan Tamil Tiger rebels in the killing.

India has accused the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of killing Gandhi, who was blown up by a woman suicide bomber in May 1991 while on the campaign trail in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The LTTE denies killing Rajiv.

The weekly magazine said: "The inquiry into Rajiv Gandhi's killing indicates the DMK party for colluding with the LTTE. Its disclosures could endanger the fragile Congress-United Front relationship."

The Congress (I) Party provides parliamentary backing to Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's minority United Front government.

"The report ... holds Tamil

Nadu Chief Minister Karunanidhi and his DMK party responsible for abetting Rajiv Gandhi's murderers," the magazine added.

The DMK helped the LTTE with weapons through "convoys" when it was out of power in Tamil Nadu to fight Indian troops sent by Rajiv to Sri Lanka in 1987, the magazine alleged.

DMK leader Karunanidhi, who was ruling Tamil Nadu at the time of Rajiv's assassination, threatened to pull out of the government on Saturday after accusing New Delhi of failing to deal with regional concerns.

The DMK party has 18 of the front's 180 MPs and three government ministers.

"The United Front has been living on borrowed time since the report on Rajiv Gandhi's assassination was presented to the Home Minister Indrajit Gupta on August 28," the magazine said.

The preliminary 5,280-page report by justice Milap Chand Jain, who began his probe in October 1993, investigated the events leading up to the killing and those responsible for it.

Indian newspapers echoed the magazine by saying there

would be "fresh alignments" in New Delhi.

The Asian Age headlined "Jain report may shatter front." It quoted a top Congress (I) official as saying the party may pull down the United Front if the report's findings are true.

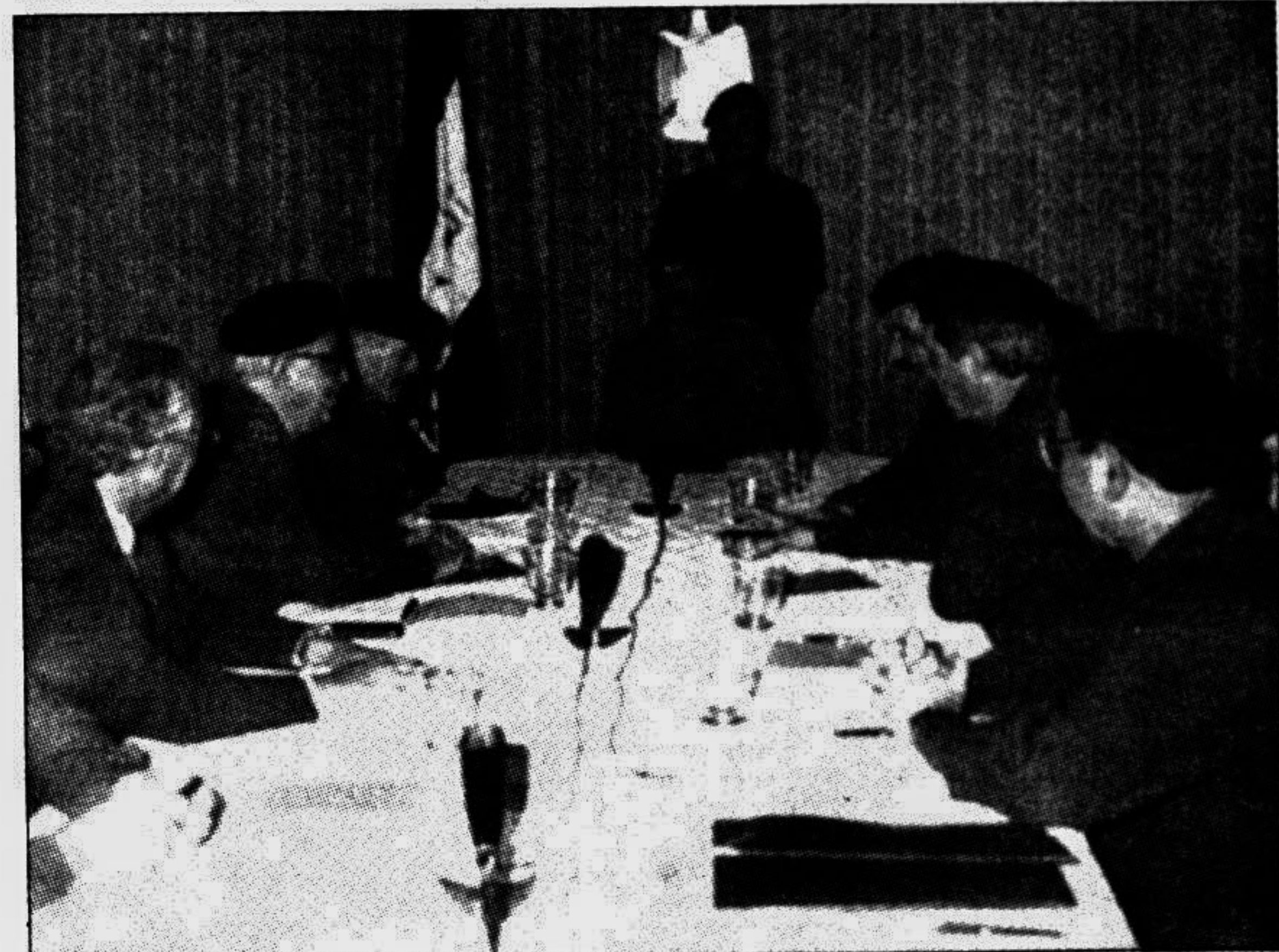
K Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy, a member of the Congress Working Committee said: "If they (the findings) are true then it will be difficult for us to support the government."

Another Congress (I) official said the government should present the report in parliament when it begins its winter session on November 19.

Pranab Mukherjee, a former federal minister said "as per the law, the report has to be tabled in parliament and we demand that it should be done on the opening day."

The report also blamed two former premiers, Vishwanath Pratap Singh and Chandra Shekhar, "for their laxity in assessing the threat to Rajiv," the magazine said.

Rajiv was once one of the most protected world leaders and was guarded by an elite commando force. But the cover was withdrawn after he lost general elections in 1989.



Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, seated centre, Friday night, chaired a meeting with high Iraqi officials reviewing the political situation with the United Nations. Iraq's deputy premier Tariq Aziz, 2nd left, will travel to New York to meet with Secretary General Kofi Annan about the latest developments with the Iraq Security Council's Special Commission. — AP/UNB photo

## 'Thousands of Afghans risk starvation'

KABUL, Nov 9: A Taliban food blockade on opposition-held central Afghanistan and the looting of United Nations' wheat by their own leaders has placed thousands of Afghans at risk from starvation, aid workers warned yesterday, reports AFP.

With the failure of the annual harvest in the central mountainous Hazarajat region of the war-torn country, relief workers say the isolated and already impoverished area is on the brink of disaster.

"In just three districts affected, there are 150,000 people who will face life-threatening hunger this winter and many will not survive," a Western aid worker recently returned from the area told reporters.

The aid worker, who requested anonymity, said unless the Taliban lift their blockade and allow food to enter the region before snow closes key roads within weeks, little can be done before May next year.

"This is already a chronic food deficit area, and now they have this disaster," the aid worker said, adding that only three of the 10 districts badly

hit had been fully surveyed.

According to observers' reports, in August the Taliban began blocking all food supplies going into the opposition-held area west of the town of Ghazni, 134 kilometres south of Kabul.

The blockade is complete: Women are being searched for small amounts of food hidden under their armpits and there are no trucks going through," a Western traveller said.

Aid workers say that early rainfall and a heavy frost have led to a 40 to 100 per cent destruction of the annual wheat and potato harvest, which will force many families to survive on seeds alone.

"Families will have to eat their seeds over the winter, and will run out of food by February. We cannot access the area before May," an aid worker said.

Exacerbating the problem, the World Food Programme (WFP) admitted it had lost its entire northern Afghan stock of 3,800 tonnes of wheat — much of which was earmarked for the area — to anti-Taliban alliance looters.



Presidents wave to photographers Saturday, during the official picture of the VII Ibero-American Summit in Port of Spain. Top row from left are Brazil's Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Cuba's Fidel Castro, Spain's Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar. Bottom row from left, Venezuela's President Rafael Caldera, Portugal's President Jorge Sampaio and Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori. — AP/UNB photo

## HK marks 1st Remembrance Day after July handover

HONG KONG, Nov 9: A police band played the Chinese national anthem in front of an old colonial monument Sunday as Hong Kong remembered those who died in the world wars in the first such memorial service since it returned to Chinese rule in July, reports AP.

Unlike his colonial predecessors, Hong Kong's new leader Tung Chee-hwa did not attend the traditionally British Remembrance Day service.

Instead, Tung sent his personal aide, Stephen Cheng, who laid a wreath at the cenotaph in downtown Hong Kong.

No Chinese soldiers were among the some 100 veterans who attended the service this year. In their place were boy scouts who stood around the stone cenotaph, which carries the inscription "The Glorious Dead."

Top Chinese officials and members of the People's Liberation Army declined invitations to the ceremony.

A police bugler sounded the "Last Post" in front of senior government officials, legislators and a few hundred guests and spectators who observed a two-minute silence.

Police pipers played Western

military music when wreaths were laid in front of the cenotaph, where a Chinese flag and a Hong Kong flag flew side by side. Prayers were said in Chinese and English. At the end, police band played the Chinese national anthem, "The March of the Volunteers."

Organiser Tso Chiu-tin said the occasion was important because "we believe all citizens and soldiers killed in the wars deserve our respect and remembrance."

Tso was not offended by the absence of Tung. "He sent his aide. It shows he approves this event in Hong Kong."

British veteran Jack Edwards, 79, urged the Hong Kong government to hold an official service for future observances and Tung to learn from Chinese President Jiang Zemin, whose first act when he went to the United States recently "was to lay a wreath at Pearl Harbour."

Edwards, a prisoner-of-war during the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, said the absence of soldiers did not mar the ceremony.

"The important thing is the veterans are here, and the police band played music for the veterans," he said.

## Sunni Muslim lawyer killed in eastern Pakistan

LAHORE, Nov 9: Assaults gunned down a Sunni Muslim lawyer and critically injured his associate in the latest religiously motivated attack in eastern Pakistan, police said today, reports AP.

Nadeem Iqbal Awan, the secretary-general of the Sunni Muslim Party of Islamic Scholars, was meeting with colleagues at his office yesterday (Saturday) evening when the attack took place, police said.

Two men on a motorcycle sped up to Awan's office in Multan, a town in Punjab province, 230 kilometres south of the provincial capital Lahore, and fired through the door.

Awan died instantly of gunshot wounds, while another lawyer present, also a Sunni Muslim activist, was critically injured.

On Sunday dozens of people, wailing and beating their chests in grief, protested Awan's killing and demanded the arrest of the gunman.

Protesters condemned the government saying it had failed to curb sectarian violence.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

## Pakistan stresses UN's neutral role in solving Afghan crisis

ISLAMABAD, Nov 9: Pakistan underlines an impartial, neutral role of the United Nations in solving the lingering Afghan problem, which is affecting peace and development in the region, Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad said here Saturday, reports Xinhua.

Describing outside interference in Afghanistan as the major hindrance in the resolution of the Afghan crisis, Shamshad said the UN and other concerned parties should exert their influence to bring the conflicting parties within the negotiating range for a lasting solution.

Outside interference is aggravating the conflict in Afghanistan, which must be stopped for regional peace, he said.

Addressing a workshop for economic and financial journalists from news agencies of the countries of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), he said Pakistan is keen to see an early end to the Afghan conflict, "because, this problem is directly affecting

us."

He dispelled the impression that Pakistan is siding with the Taliban militia, or interfering in the affairs of the neighbouring country. "In fact, we are helping all the Afghan groups to come on the negotiating table for a permanent peace," he stressed.

## Li Peng begins Japan tour

TOKYO, Nov 9: Chinese Premier Li Peng arrives in Japan Tuesday for a six-day official visit with economics dominating the agenda, at a time when both sides are seeking to advance a thaw in ties after two years of frostiness, reports AFP.

Li's trip follows close on the heels of Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's visit to China in September.

The exchange of visits marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties.

## Three get Maulana Azad Awards

MUMBAI, Nov 9: The Maulana Azad Awards for communal harmony were presented to actor turned politician Sunil Dutt, Dalit leader RS Gavai, social worker Vipra Kadri and two others here this evening, reports PTI.

The awards instituted by the Mumbai Regional Congress Committee Minority Cell to commemorate golden jubilee of Indian independence, were distributed by the AICC general secretaries Madhav Rao Scindia and Tariq Anwar at the Anjuman-i-Islam grounds.

Chairman of the AICC minority cell, Shahid Siddiqui presided. Deputy Chairperson of Rajya Sabha Najma Heptulla and MRCC President Murti Deora were among those present.

Sunil Dutt has been honoured for his hard work to break down barriers between communities with a view to strengthen national integration. Kadri who is chairperson of the Children's Aid Society has been lauded for her efforts towards relief and rehabilitation of riots and earthquake affected people in Maharashtra.

## Viswabharati to launch CD-Rom package of Tagore

CALCUTTA, Nov 9: A comprehensive CD-Rom package of Rabindranath Tagore's works would be launched by Viswabharati by May 1998, reports PTI.

The package comprising selected manuscripts paintings, songs and correspondences by Tagore, would be made available in three discs. Santa Shankar Dasgupta, the project's coordinator in Viswabharati said here today.

The first CD would be launched in May '98 followed by the rest two after every six months, he said.

The Department of Electronics (DOE) sanctioned Rs 50 lakh in 1996 for the three years project, "the money was sanctioned as per DOE's objectives to make the students familiar with multimedia technology," Dr AB Saha, DOE director, told PTI here.

While one set of CD-Rom package, with representative works of Tagore, would be launched for the Tagore aficionados, Viswabharati would compile all his creations in another set only for inhouse research at Rabindra Bhavan Museum which houses all

Tagore memorabilia, Dasgupta said.

DOE sources said the life and works of Mahatma Gandhi would also be compiled in a CD-Rom package in future.

"We have used the digital enhancement and restoration technique to preserve the rare works of Tagore, before they are irretrievably lost due to the natural process of decay," Dasgupta said.

The restored works will also include Tagore's voice recording and first editions of his books.

He said there were no problems in getting Tagore's works as Viswabharati had the copyright and 90 per cent of the works could be procured from its Kala Bhavan.

Viswabharati is employing its own team of researchers, he said adding the songs were accompanied with their picturisations for which the expertise of professionals in selecting the locations were got.

Viswabharati has already launched a web site on Tagore which includes his songs, poems and other works, the site was formally launched by Prime Minister IK Gujral on August 30.

## BRIEFLY

## Israelis pay homage to Rabin:

Tens of thousands of Israelis gathered Saturday night in Tel Aviv to pay homage to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at the square where he was assassinated two years ago, AFP says from Jerusalem.

Hundreds of banners at the square, which has been named for Rabin, read "We will not forget and we call out for peace." Thousands of police officers and soldiers were also there, to ensure that the event proceeds peacefully.

## Train mishap claims 3 in Portugal:

Three people were killed and 12 were injured in a collision between two passenger trains on Saturday in the Algarve region of southern Portugal, a medical source said, AFP reports from Lisbon.

The driver of one of the trains which was travelling between Lagos and Vila Real de Santo Antonio was among the dead, an official of Portuguese Railways (CP) said.

## Blast leaves 5 hurt in Philippines:

An unidentified motorist who was flagged down by police, tossed a grenade at their patrol car in Manila early yesterday, leaving five people injured, Philippine police and witnesses said, AFP reports from Manila.

## Hizbullah rebel killed in Lebanon:

The pro-Iranian Hizbullah group on Saturday said one of its guerrillas was killed in an attack on Israeli troops in South Lebanon on Friday.

A Hizbullah spokesman told Reuters that Nabil Mohammed Akhdar was killed in a Hizbullah attack on an Israeli position in the Jewish state's South Lebanon occupation zone. His death raised to 53 the number of Lebanese guerrillas killed in South Lebanon violence since the start of 1997.

## Congress reassures support to Gujral govt

Mahesh Uniyal writes from New Delhi

With the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) giving it the jitters, the Congress hastened to reassure India's ruling alliance of its continued support even as it backed off a bid to join the United Front (UF) government.

A meeting of the highest decision making body of the Congress tomorrow is expected to lay off criticism of Prime Minister I.K. Gujral and his ministerial team and instead train its guns on the main opposition BJP.

Congress chief Sitaram Kesri, who disowned his reported proposal that the Congress should become part of Gujral's five-month-old coalition government, reiterated that his party had no intention of toppling the UF regime. Kesri said his party did not want to destabilise the government which it is keeping in office because this would help the BJP.

The Congress stood by the party executive resolution adopted after the unclear verdict of the May 1996 general election that it would back any political alliance to keep the Hindu nationalist BJP out of office. However, the Congress would continue to insist on good governance as a condition for its support, Kesri added.

According to political ana-

lysts, the 78-year-old Kesri who is said to be tempted by a now-or-never chance to be Prime Minister by pulling the rug from under the government and staking claim with the help of friendly UF constituents, finds his hands tied by rivals within the party and the psychological warfare launched by the BJP.

While the BJP threatens to poach its lawmakers, the Congress has been humiliated by the rebuff from the UF which rejected the possibility of the Congress joining the government. Kesri's reported offer to join the government was also said to have been opposed by senior Congress leaders.

Soon after the key Left and regional parties in the UF ruled out admitting the Congress into the government, Kesri denied having made the offer. "I had only said that we can consider an invitation (to join the government), not accept it straightaway," he said.

Talk of the Congress joining the government is said to be meant to keep disgruntled party lawmakers from walking into the arms of the BJP as happened last month in Uttar Pradesh. Senior BJP leaders, including former Prime Minis-

ter Atal Behari Vajpayee, have declared that their party can cobble together a majority in Parliament like the BJP government did in the country's most populous state with the aid of splits in rival ranks.

While political observers consider this unlikely in the Parliament, the BJP poses a serious threat to Congress unity in western Gujarat state where the opposition party can topple a Congress-backed government with the help of Congress dissidents during a confidence vote there next week.

A faction of the Congress in the state is angry with the party's decision not to join the Gujrat government and is reported to have warned that it may be forced to join hands with the BJP to topple the government.

The Congress is trying hard to avoid a repeat of the Uttar Pradesh events in Gujarat which would badly demoralise the party, give a handle to Kesri's rivals within the party and increase the credibility of the BJP's claims of doing the same in Parliament, say analysts.

Kesri's "conciliatory gestures" in recent days are said to be driven by the BJP threat of

splitting the party. While the idea of joining the UF government -- which goes against the Congress poll manifesto of providing stability through single party rule -- is meant to counter the temptations of office being dangled by the BJP, the assurance of support to the UF aims to dispel Congress lawmakers' dread of mid-term polls.

According to senior unnamed party leaders quoted by newspapers, statements by the Congress chief some months ago that coalition governments were not in the national interest had led to panic among Congress MPs who did not want to face voters again so soon.

The BJP threat has also led the UF government to plan a tightening of the decade-old law to curb defections by lawmakers. Split over how to do this, top UF leaders were scheduled to meet later this month to thrash out an agreement on the proposed changes in the Anti-Defection Act.

The Prime Minister was also due to discuss the amendments to the law with representatives of parties outside the UF including the BJP which has also declared that it favors plugging the loopholes in the law.

India Abroad News Service



Saudi Arabia's King Fahd, right, receives Japan's Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, left, in Riyadh Saturday. During Hashimoto's two-day visit to the country he will propose an accord on investment protection and discuss cooperation on environmental protection and education, the Japanese Embassy said. Background is an unidentified interpreter. — AP/UNB photo