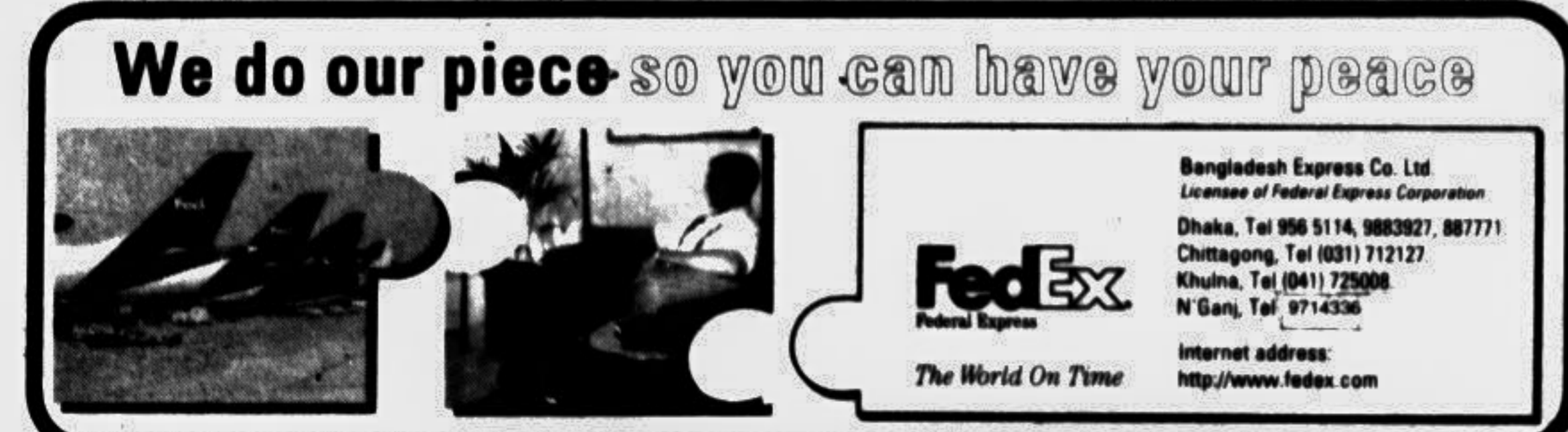


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Bangladesh Betar artistes staged a sit-in in front of Betar Bhaban in the city yesterday demanding introduction of pension provision for them. — Star photo

Exporters dispute govt assessment

Over 20 shrimp processing plants have standard as per EU manual

Shrimp exporters have disputed the government's assessment that only six processing plants were up to the European Union standard and claimed that there were more than 20 which should have been on the list.

The government has recently sent to Brussels a list of six shrimp processing plants which they found suitable by EU health and hygiene standards. It is expecting a positive response from the EU headquarters on its plea for withdrawal of the temporary ban on shrimp exports to Europe.

The ban on Bangladesh frozen foods came July 30 because of what the EU said the exporters' failure to meet the criteria.

EU inspectors are expected to visit Bangladesh next month to see whether the conditions were improved and whether the ban could be lifted.

The exporters are now fearing that other importing countries like Japan and the US may lose interest in Bangladeshi shrimp because 'Bangladesh has now six processing plants which can maintain the EU quality'.

Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association president Golam Mostafa claimed at a press conference yesterday that at least 22 to 24 factories were now able to maintain the EU standard.

'This is not correct that only six factories are capable of doing that,' Mostafa said. He claimed that an EU team had told them last month that some 20 processing plants were maintaining their health regulations.

He said Bangladesh's annual fish exports might be affected because these six plants would not be able to export a total of 30,000 tonnes a year. 'These plants could export only 5 to 6 thousand tonnes each year,' Mostafa said, warning that Bangladesh's foreign currency reserves might face a crisis if plants other than the six were not cleared as eligible.

The BFFEA president told journalists that some members of the government evaluation committee who recently visited 35 plants might not have enough knowledge about the EU regulations.

He said the government must reply to the exporters as to why their names were dropped from the list after they had spent huge sums on upgrading their plants according to the EU manual.

Mostafa, whose own plant also failed to pass the test, charged the government with neglecting the frozen food sector for long.

'Export receipts from frozen foods could be as high as Tk 5,500 crore in the next five years as against the current Tk 1,300 crore if the government would take a long-term plan,' Mostafa said.

BFFEA secretary general Dr Aftabuzzaman and vice president Salauddin Ahmed were also present.

Arsenic contamination

From Page 1

should properly utilise nature's gift.

'As there is no scientific explanation for what exactly causes the disease (Artesimiasis), we should really give it a second thought before continuing to use groundwater resources.'

He further said, 'Let the underground water level rise, allowing time. The more we pump out water, the deeper we have to reach underground, raising the possibility of contamination by other minerals that could be equally toxic. Who knows what is happening underground. So, the safest and easiest approach to the crisis is shifting back to the habit of using surface water — pond, canal and river water.'

He pointed out that diarrhoea is not a water borne disease, only cholera is. 'So, if they (other experts) say it will involve the risk of diarrhoeal epidemic if villagers are asked to use surface water again, I would say, they are wrong.'

While talking to The Daily Star recently, Director General of Health Services Prof A K M Nurul Anwar said, 'We are not going to consider options for use of surface water for immediate solution to the problem. We are going to wait until something concrete is recommended.'

Referring to the research carried out by the National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine (NIPSOM) over the years, Prof Anwar said, 'In the meantime, we have developed a chemical powder packet that guarantees removal of 90 per cent arsenic minerals from contaminated water if used properly. It is already being distributed and widely recognised.'

Meanwhile, the World Health Organisation (WHO), at its New Delhi Regional Consultation this year, recommended alternative use of surface water.

The WB and UNICEF are not very interested to recommend such a shift so quickly as they see possibility of even greater impact. 'It's too early to advise such a plan which may have complete wrong implications other than the good side of it,' said Babar N Kabir, Chief of WB's Water and Sanitation Programme.

Arsenic concentration in groundwater above normal level, first identified back in 1993 by testing tubewell water, was alarming in some parts of the country. The first detection and subsequent confirmation in 1995 of high level arsenic concentration in many hand-pumped tubewells raised serious health concern. Primary investigation revealed that tubewell water in 60 districts out of the 64 is more or less contaminated with arsenic, exceeding WHO's permissible limit of 0.05 milligram per liter (mg/L). A joint survey by the School of Environment Studies of West Bengal's Jadavpur University and Dhaka Community Hospital (DCH), analysing over 6000 water samples taken from 41 districts showed that 45 per cent of the samples contained arsenic more than the WHO-recommended value.

Shell

From Page 1

had offered Shell Block-10 in the first meeting last month. But that meeting also ended inconclusively as Shell insisted on going by the evaluation report. In the second meeting on November 3, the negotiation committee made no promises but reinvited them to a third round of talks.

Shell was repeatedly asked whether it would quit from the second round block bidding if it was not offered any other block than blocks 5 and 10. Shell has not agreed on any of the two blocks but had not said anything about withdrawal from the bidding.

Shell had asked whether further blocks would be offered to it. The committee, in reply, said that it had 'no such mandate' from the higher authorities, the sources said.

Meanwhile, Irish company Tullow would be offered a second block, not as the operator but as a partner to another company.

Tullow has been already offered the most sought after Block-9 and it has submitted a draft PSC to the government. A top Tullow official is now in the city to negotiate with the committee.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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Water confce in Delhi ends
Consensus on augmenting lean season flow of Ganges water

NEW DELHI, Nov 20: A two-day water conference of India, Bangladesh and Nepal ended here yesterday with a consensus on a number of propositions including the augmentation of the lean season flow of the Ganges water, reports UNB.

The conference attended by water experts, academics and politicians from the three countries also agreed on regional navigation network in the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna (GBM) basin and water-based integrated GBM regional development.

The conference on eastern Himalayan rivers (phase-II) was sponsored by Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP), Centre for Policy Research (CPR) of India and Institute of Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) of Nepal.

Indian Prime Minister I K Gujral who invited the participants of the conference at a tea in Delhi expressed appreciation of the efforts of BUP, CPR and IIDS to promote regional cooperation.

Speaking at the concluding session, Indian Minister for Power and Energy Y K Alag said the Indian government is keen to work in cooperation with its neighbours — Bangladesh and Nepal — to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development.

The Gujral doctrine is focussed on such a vision of regional development, he added.

Dr Khaliqzaman Ahmed, who led the Bangladesh delegation, said the three country group would continue their efforts to help promote cooperation for development in the GBM region for equitable benefit of India, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Dr M Sanju, the Nepalese team leader, and Dr Rai Panandikar, Director of CPR, India echoed the similar sentiment.

The conference noted that the GBM region contained the largest congregation of the poorest of the world. This region which comprised 0.12 per cent of the world's landmass sustains 10 per cent of the world's population.

This situation is entirely avoidable as the region has been blessed by nature with fertile lands, water resources, hydro-power potential and hard-working people, experts observed at the conference.

The study phase-I had outlined a number of possibilities to be pursued further for converting the water resources potential of the GBM region into wealth for the nations sharing them.

Dhaka to join 'global march' against child labour Mar 2

By Staff Correspondent

A 'Global March' initiative against child labour will begin from January next and continue till June in Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe and America aiming to eliminate hazardous child labour by the year 2000 and all types of child labour by 2010.

Bangladesh will also join the programme when an international group of 'Core Marchers' will march through the country from Chittagong to Hill, the border point in Dinajpur, from March 2 next.

Announcing the programme at a press conference in the city yesterday, Wahida Banu and Aminul Islam, convener and member-secretary of the Bangladesh chapter of the initiative, said that a series of activities promoting the causes of child workers will also be organised under the aegis of 'Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum'. The Forum is a conglomerate of 80 non-governmental organizations involved in protecting the interest of child workers.

Day care centre opens inside Secretariat

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday formally inaugurated a Day Care Centre inside the Bangladesh Secretariat for the children of female officers and employees working there, reports UNB.

The centre, first of its kind for the public servants, with a capacity of 50 children has started functioning from November 2.

Some 22 children are now being looked after from 9 am till 5 pm, the working hours for the government officials.

Mannan condemns 'attacks' on house of BNP MP

By Staff Correspondent

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, MP, has strongly condemned the 'attacks' on the house of party MP Abdul Wahab' at Baguia village of Nityanandapur union under Shaalakupa thana of Jhenidah in the early morning of yesterday.

In a statement last night, Mannan Bhuiyan said the ruling party-backed terrorists ransacked Wahab's house, damaged and looted valuables and assaulted his relatives there in the presence of police who picked up the neighbours including two nephews of the MP in an 'unjustified way'.

The attacks were aimed at getting the Awami league-blessed chairman candidate elected in the union parishad elections, the BNP leader alleged.

He also demanded arrests and exemplary punishment to those who attacked Wahab's residence.

IGP calls on PM

The newly-appointed Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mohammad Ismail Husein yesterday called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office here, reports BSS.

Shibir activists

From Page 1

remand for three days for questioning.

Police sources said Tuesday's operation was launched after receiving secret information that some Shibir cadres were staying in a hide-out at Chandanpura with arms.

Most of the cadres could not be arrested as there was no back-up force, a senior police official said.

He informed that the entire Chandanpura area, Chittagong College hostel, Mohsin College and a madrasa adjacent to it, were being used by Shibir cadres as their dens for a long time.

Police launched four raids in those areas during the past eight months.

Sources said due to lack of well planned operation police hardly could take effective steps to round up the Shibir cadres and recover the sophisticated weapons possessed by them.

Armed Forces Day

From Page 1

Muhammad Mahbubur Rahman, Naval Chief Rear Admiral Mohammad Nurul Islam and Air Chief Air-vice Marshal Jamal Uddin Ahmed will place wreaths at the Shikha Anirban to pay homage to the martyred members of the Armed Forces.

Chiefs of the three services will pay courtesy call on the President at Bangabhaban. They will also call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The Prime Minister will release commemorative stamp and first day cover on the silver jubilee of the Armed Forces at the Armed Forces Division.

A reception to the gallantry award winning freedom fighters and members of the shaheed families will be held at the Prime Minister's office at the Dhaka Cantonment.

Another reception will be held at Senakunja in the evening.

A military hardware display at the old Airport runway will begin today. The President will inaugurate the exhibition.

A number of BN ships will be kept open for visitors at Sadarghat, Narayanganj, Chittagong, Khulna and Barisal.

Refugee repatriation

From Page 1

the river by a wooden bridge at Ramgarh on November 29 and 30.

Our Khagrachhari correspondent adds: Chief Whip of Jatiya Sangsad and Convener of the National Committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts Abul Hasnat Abdullah and other members of the committee would welcome the refugees on the Bangladesh side.

Sports Minister of Tripura Jiten Choudhury would see them off on the Indian side.

Akhoy Muni Chakma, a member of the Task Force on refugees, yesterday went to Chhoto Merung to review the preparations for resumption of the repatriation process. Officials also visited Tabalchhari to see the last minute preparations for the repatriation. Upendra Lal Chakma, the leader of the refugees welfare committee in Tripura also visited Tabalchhari.

The refugees would be provided lunch, cash of Tk 21,000 and rations before they are sent home.

Meanwhile, highway robbers waylaid a micro-bus carrying a number of a human rights organisation Odhikar and Save



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PW-41 quotes DGFI chief in court

Some officers, not entire army, were involved in conspiracy

A witness in Bangabandhu murder case yesterday told the court that former DGFI chief Brig Rouf had spoken of an anti-government conspiracy hatched by some army officers, not by the entire army, reports UNB.

He named some particular officers, he didn't tell involvement of the army," said Major (dismissed) AH Ziauddin Ahmed, the 42nd prosecution witness of the case during cross-examination by Advocate Khan Saifur Rahman, defence counsel for Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farooqur Rahman.

Ziauddin said the director general of the DGFI had told him of the conspiracy a few days before the August 15 incident as he was one of the concerned officers.

To a question, he said although the DGFI operation is confined to defence services, it can be expanded to civilian matters and even outside the country depending on assignments.

'May CIA also come into it?' asked the defence lawyer.

'SI may also come into it,' said the witness, who was Dhaka Detachment Officer of the DGFI during the August 15 incident.

'I don't have any knowledge,' was his reply when he was asked about RAW.

The witness said he does not know whether any measure had been taken to foil the conspiracy against the government. 'It was the matter of the DG.'

He said constant surveillance was also the matter of the policy-makers and he did not receive any order after he was told about the conspiracy.

In reply to a question from Judge Kazi Golam Rasul, he said that at his level he was not supposed to know whether any measure was taken to undo the conspiracy.

Ziauddin said some of his movements on August 15 were under order from higher authority and some were his 'self-imposed responsibility'.

He said he went to the radio station and to the DGFI office as part of his self-imposed responsibility. Because 'going to the office at that time was not my duty as I was supposed to be in the university area at that time.'

The witness said he performed his self-imposed responsibility to verify the truth, one of the basic jobs an intelligence man.

Ziauddin said the duty of going to the university and acting as the personal bodyguard of Bangabandhu on August 15 was a 'mission'. He said there were some risks in heading to the Rakkhi Bahini Headquarters but he had to go there to perform his 'duty'.

Khan Saifur Rahman will further cross-examine the witness when the trial proceedings resume on Sunday at 9:30 am.

Some stranded Pakistanis start 'fast unto death'

By Staff Correspondent

A section of stranded Pakistanis began a 'fast unto death' yesterday to press demands for their repatriation to Pakistan.

Led by Ejaz Ahmed Siddiqui, the Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC-Ejaz) gathered at the Osmani Uddyan yesterday afternoon.

But police, did not allow them to squat near the Secretariat and instead permitted them to sit near the City Corporations office.

From Page 1

eventually bring it down.

On Wednesday, Sharif, in power for nine months and at odds with the judiciary, appealed to Leghari to approve the bill, saying it would end the political stalemate.

The Supreme Court suspended Sharif's legislation allowing him the right of appeal if convicted of contempt hours before it was due to resume its hearings into charges that the Prime Minister insulted the judiciary and its Chief Justice, Sajjad Ali Shah.

No immediate resolution of the two-week confrontation appeared in sight. In theory, Sharif could be forced to resign if found guilty of contempt of court but there are no precedents and lawyers said it was uncharted territory.

Army Chief of Staff Jehangir Karamat was reported to be trying to break the deadlock between Sharif and the legal system by meeting key players.

Sharif told reporters President Leghari's reluctance to sign the parliamentary bill was fuelling the constitutional crisis.

Karamat held meetings with Sharif and Leghari soon after his return home yesterday after cutting short a foreign tour.

Sharif cancelled a scheduled address to the nation on television following his meeting with the Army Chief.

Amid the rumours Sharif could be on his way out, the main opposition leader and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto urged Sharif's ruling

Pak SC suspends bill

Pakistan Muslim League to choose a new leader to save the democratic system.

Sharif should voluntarily resign, Bhutto said in remarks published here, warning failure to find a new prime minister could lead to martial law in the country.

Meanwhile, tight security surrounded today's Supreme Court hearing into contempt charges against Nawaz Sharif after the chief justice said he feared for his life.

Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah did not elaborate on why he felt his life was in danger, but in a letter to president he requested additional security.

Outside the grand white marble courthouse, dozens of police were standing guard. Special passes were issued for the proceedings and vehicles were being parked on the street outside the court building.

Although it's not clear why Shah felt he needed greater protection, there has been some acts of violence associated with the case.

The former head of the Supreme Court Bar Association Akram Sheikh, who also was party to the charge against Sharif, was beaten up on Tuesday and on Wednesday his car was attacked.

Indo-Bangla border confce concludes

RANGPUR, Nov 20: A two-day border conference between Bangladesh and India ended here today in a cordial and friendly atmosphere, reports BSS.

Held at the Kurigram Circuit House, the conference prepared a draft accord to resolve border disputes on boundary demarcation and to erect boundary pillars to check smuggling and trespass.

At the conference, Deputy Commissioner of Kurigram Abu Waheed led the four-member home team while Dhulri District Magistrate Lal Chand Shindhi was the head of three-member Indian team.

Dhaka Zoo

From Page 1

The design of the snake cages was also found faulty. Visitors could hardly see inside as the glasses virtually became mirrors due to their vertical angle.

Zoo officials said there was no provision for a safety fence around the 'tiger runs' when they were built in 1988. If the moats had safety nets along with iron grills, 10 year-old Zakir would not have lost his life, they said.

Following Tuesday's incident, the zoo authorities had started putting safety fences around all cages and runs. The Curator said they would have to spend around Tk one lakh for the work.

Several other cages with animals of prey inside were found with torn fences.

'Elephant ride' for visitors also posed a threat to safety as those handling it took up to seven people on its back. Riders sitting in the rear were at a risk of falling down.

Although the zoo was supposed to be encircled by a high wall, there are at least 10 points through which people were seen coming in freely. A kutcha road runs from near the Zoo Museum to connect a nearby road beside the lake.

Meanwhile, the zoo authorities were considering a 'compensation package' for Zakir's parents. Zakir was a student of class one in Nababer Bagh Primary School. He came from an extremely poor family.

Sports Award

From Page 1

13 eminent sports personalities at the colourful ceremony.

Ministry of Youth and Sports reintroduced the sports award after 15 years to pay the nation's respect to the celebrated sportsmen of the country.

The recipients of the sports award are: Chess — Abul Hashem (posthumous), Harunur-Rashid, MP, Ashraf-ud-Dowlah, Zafar Imam and Kazi Nasima Hamid; Football — Amir Jang Mohammad Gaznabi (posthumous) and Ashrafuddin Ahmed Channu; Cricket — Shafulqab Haq Hira; Hockey — Abdus Sadek; Swimming — Arun Kumar Nandy; Shooting — Saiful Alam Rinki; Chess — Rani Hamid and Athletics — Su-fia Khaton.

Each award comprises a cheque for Tk 5,000, a gold medal and a certificate.

CHT accord

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the team, however, did not participate in any discussion so far.

Fazle Rabbi informed the JP presidium that the core group comprised Abul Hasnat Abdullah and Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser and the two from the PCJSS are its chief Jyotindrya Bodhipriya Larma alias Shantu Larma and one of his deputies.

The agreement is still at the drafting stage," the presidium was informed, said sources present at the meeting, chaired by JP chief H M Ershad.

The presidium decided that JP would ask for publication of the draft agreement before it was signed. The party would not accept anything in the agreement beyond the constitution, the sources added.

Mannan Bhuiyan

From Page 1

sive governments will not be liable to go by the accord hurriedly signed without protecting the interests of the country.'

He was also critical of the government for the planned CHT treaty, unilateral formation of parliamentary standing committees, deterioration in law and order and repression on Opposition leaders and activists.

The meeting was organised to accord a reception to party leader Takdir Hossain Mohammad Jasim, released from jail recently. Chaired by Nabinagar thana unit BNP president M A Mannan, it was also addressed by Mahbul Alam Tara, Ukil Abus Sattar MP, Rizvi Ahmed, Wasimul Bari, Razeef, Anwarul Haq and some others.

The Congress Party also once supported the Tigers, but changed its policy under Gandhi, who had begun to see them as terrorists. Despite Gandhi's shift in policy, the government sending troops to back the Sri Lankan government, a Tamil regional party, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, continued to support the Tigers.

Jain said the Tigers' link with DMK chief Muthuvel Karunanidhi set off a chain of events that led to LTTE's survival and growth even when the entire attitude of the government of India had changed.

Gandhi had lost power to rival VP Singh by 1991, and was campaigning for reelection when he was killed. Jain accused Singh of paying only lip service to Gandhi's security, criticising the withdrawal of elite bodyguards.