

Clinton refuses to trust Saddam, observes Iraq crisis

WASHINGTON, Nov 21: Refusing to trust Saddam Hussein, President Bill Clinton said Thursday he would "wait and see" whether Iraq allows weapons inspectors to resume work. The White House insisted Iraqi President Saddam Hussein would not be rewarded for retreating and sent more military force to the Gulf.

"This is not over," declared Sandy Berger, the President's national security adviser. Three weeks after triggering an international showdown, Saddam suddenly revoked his ban on American weapons inspectors in Iraq. UN inspectors chief Richard Butler said that if all goes well, "We'll be on the plane tomorrow morning and back in business on Friday."

Underscoring US skepticism about Iraq, the Pentagon con-

tinued its buildup, dispatching F-16 and F-15 fighters, B-1 long-range bombers, refueling planes and soldiers to man Patriot air defence missiles.

The White House insisted Saddam got nothing for backing down. Officials emphasised that the United States stood ready to veto any efforts by Russia or others to ease the United Nations' tough sanctions against Iraq.

"There is absolutely no understanding. There's no deal. There's no concessions," Berger said at a White House briefing.

However, officials also said the United States would support increasing the amount of oil Iraq is permitted to sell to raise money to buy food and medicine.

While the United States asserted that Saddam had failed, the three-week crisis exposed

divisions among allies about the use of force against Iraq. And it allowed Saddam to once again assert himself on the world stage. But it also focussed world attention on Iraq's efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

Clinton, at a prayer breakfast with religious leaders, said, "The United States must remain and will remain resolute" in preventing Saddam from developing nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. "In the coming days we will wait and see whether he does, in fact, comply with the will of the international community."

Iraq reversed course under an arrangement brokered by Russia, which promised to press for the lifting of sanctions. Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said Russia had

promised to work for a "just and fair diplomatic solution." But he acknowledged that the UN Security Council's permanent members had offered no specific commitments.

The United States declared it was not party to the Russian deal. "It is not binding on us or on the UN," Berger said. "It is not something that we are obligated to in any respect, or the UN."

The United States said that U-2 spy planes which Saddam had threatened to shoot down would continue to fly over Iraq and that Americans would remain part of the weapons inspection team.

There should be no attempt and no expectation that there will be any change in either composition of inspectors or flights that may be flown or any material change in the inspec-

tion regime that is required," Defense Secretary Cohen said at the UN after meeting Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

The White House suggested that Russia's promise to seek sanctions relief gave Saddam a face-saving way out of the crisis. An administration official said Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov had delivered a strong message to Aziz in Moscow earlier this week that the international community was united and Iraq had to back down.

Before a decisive foreign minister's meeting Wednesday night in Geneva, the White House was skeptical about Russia's diplomatic efforts. Afterwards, the administration was still reluctant to give Russia a pat on the back.

"I'd rather read the last chapter of this book before I decide

whether I like it or not," Berger said.

In recent days, Clinton raised the possibility that the United States would never allow sanctions to be lifted as long as Saddam was in power. Even after Saddam changed course, White House press secretary Mike McCurry said, "Based on his behaviour, it's hard to see how there would be any lifting."

Cohen said, "The fact is that until there is full compliance (with UN resolutions), there can be no lifting of the sanctions."

The United States was concerned that the expulsion of inspectors allowed Iraq to make some advances in its weapons programmes. Berger said the United Nations would not be able to assess what had happened until its inspectors were allowed to go back to work.

Cohen-Annan talks held

US forces to remain until Iraq allows UN inspectors

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 21: US Defence Secretary William Cohen said here Thursday that the US military buildup in the Gulf would remain in place until Iraq provides full access to UN arms inspectors, reports AFP.

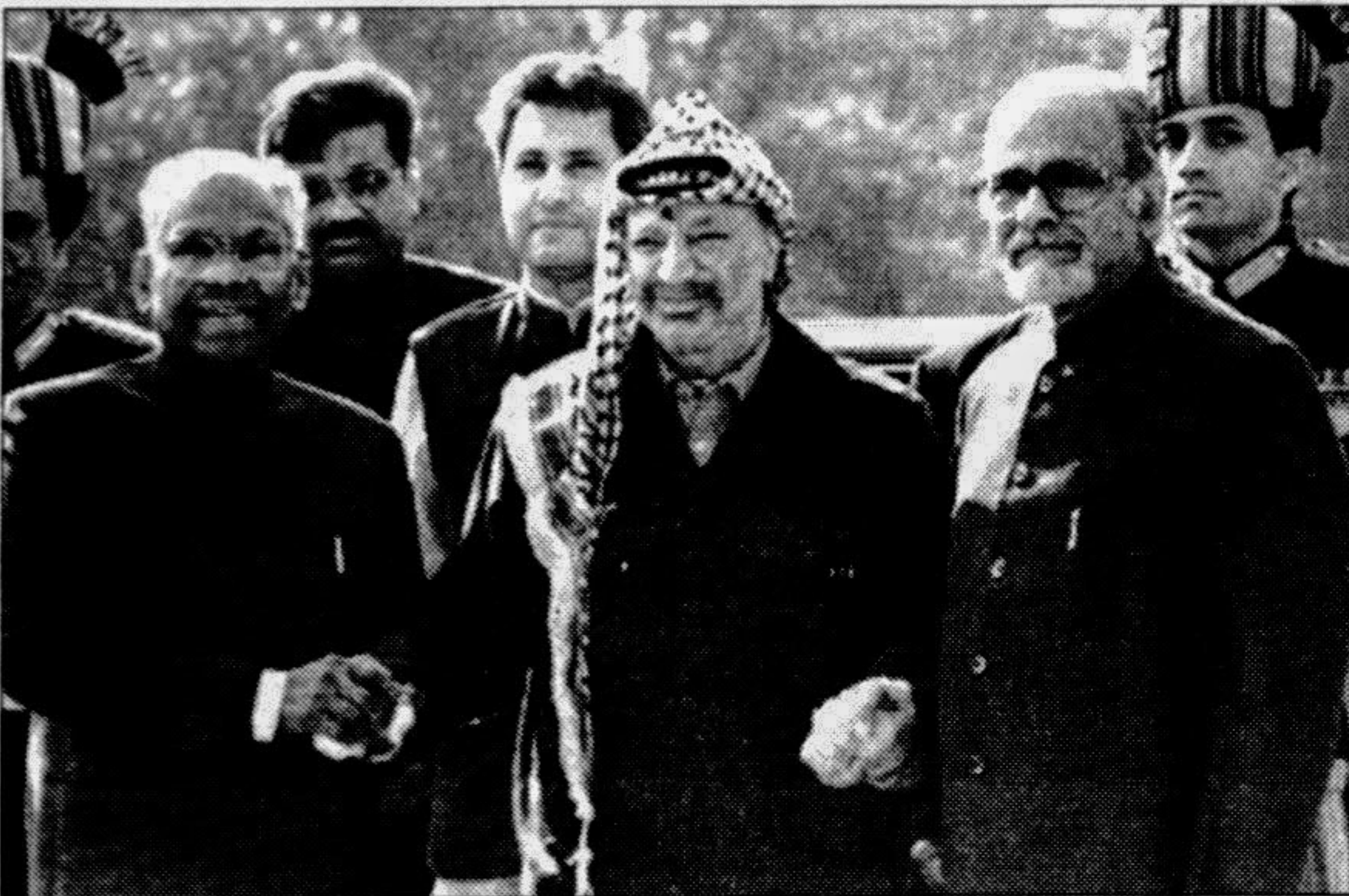
After talks here with UN chief Kofi Annan, after Baghdad agreed to allow UN weapons inspectors to return to Iraq, Cohen also said that the US military presence was sufficiently large after Washington ordered more aircraft to the Gulf on Thursday.

"After Today I would not see the need for additional aircraft or assets, unless the commander-in-chief of central command should require it," he

said. Earlier Thursday, a Pentagon spokesman in Washington said that 36 US combat aircraft had been ordered to the Gulf despite Iraq's agreement to the immediate return of the UN arms inspectors.

"The forces will stay as long as they are necessary to be there to make sure that our own forces are protected," Cohen said.

He added that the timeframe depended on "how long it will take Saddam Hussein to realise there must be full compliance. They will be there until there is full compliance, and ready to enforce whatever actions are necessary."



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, centre, is welcomed by Indian President K R Narayanan, left, and Prime Minister I K Gujral upon his arrival at the Presidential Palace in New Delhi Thursday. Arafat is on four-day visit to India to discuss bilateral and international issues. — AP/UNB photo

Red alert fearing LTTE bombings Troops consolidating positions along key land route in Lanka

COLOMBO, Nov 21: Sri Lankan troops were today consolidating positions captured from Tamil Tiger separatists as government forces went on alert for guerilla bombings at the start of a week-long commemoration by the rebels of their dead comrades, officials said, reports AFP.

Air force jets on Thursday pounded targets of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) along a key land route: troops are battling to capture, the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

"By afternoon, troops commenced consolidating in the newly-captured areas having forced the terrorists to move further northwards," the ministry statement said.

It came as the LTTE began its "heroes' week" celebrations and Sri Lanka went on maximum

alert for guerilla bombings.

Thousands of troops attempting to open the 76-kilometre highway through territory held by the LTTE had only 20 kilometres more to go, a Defence Ministry spokesman said on Thursday.

Spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said about 20,000 soldiers were advancing through cross country to open the LTTE-held land route to the northern Peninsula of Jaffna, which is currently supplied by air and sea.

He did not say when they hoped to establish the land route to Jaffna but said there had been minimal resistance from the guerillas in the past few days.

Defence sources said the navy had sunk two LTTE boats which were believed to have about 12 people aboard.

Multiple births — a failure not a victory

BOSTON, Nov 21: To those who specialize in fertility treatment, the birth of seven babies to one woman is no miracle, reports AP.

The goal of fertility medicine is to produce a single healthy baby. Bobbi McCaughey's delivery in Des Moines, Iowa, on Wednesday of septuplets — amazing as it is — is seen by many in the field as a failure, not a victory.

"We don't consider this a happy moment," said Dr. Elizabeth Ginsburg of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

The reason is that multiple pregnancies virtually always end with premature delivery. This increases the chance of losing all the babies or delivering ones that are permanently damaged, physically or mentally.

In McCaughey's case, the babies were healthy and reasonably big — ranging between 2 and 3 pound (0.9 and 1.4 kilos)

— because she was able to carry the seven for nearly 31 weeks, which is longer than the norm for so many fetuses.

Fertility medicine has permitted pregnancy in thousands of women who otherwise could not conceive. Yet, the tools are rather crude, and doctors cannot precisely control how many fetuses will take root in the womb.

Twins and triplets are common. And as the McCaughey's bounty shows, more — many more — sometimes happen.

"This is something we fear," said Dr. David Walmer, head of the In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) programme at Duke University.

Doctors try to lower the chances of multiple births by regulating the amount of fertility medicines they give, counting the number of eggs produced and fertilising them in the test tube. But clearly, none of these approaches is perfect.

According to the US Na-

tional Centre of Health Statistics, the number of triplets, quadruplets and more has tripled since the 1970s, and the use of fertility drugs accounts for most of the increase. There were 4,594 of these babies in the United States in 1994.

When women are infertile because they have infrequent periods, doctors often try a drug called clomiphene, which stimulates ovulation. The drug works by interfering with estrogen in the brain, and about half of couples get pregnant within six months of use. About one in 10 of these pregnancies produces twins.

When this medicine fails, doctors often try injections of follicle stimulating hormone, which triggers the ovaries to release eggs. About 25 per cent of the pregnancies that result are multiple. Of these, two-thirds are twins, and one-third are triplets or more.

Mir's crew successfully tests solar panel

MOSCOW, Nov 21: The Mir's crew successfully finished a solar panel test early Friday after a failed attempt last week that caused the Russian space station's computer to shut down, officials said, reports AP.

The five-hour test, which began Thursday night and ended shortly after midnight, went on without a hitch," said Vera Medvedkova, a spokeswoman for the Mission Control.

The solar-panel test is tricky as the crew must turn an adjacent solar panel away from the sun and reconnect power cables, officials said. The panels supply Mir's power and the crew must check their effectiveness from time to time.

When the Russian-American crew first tried to perform the test a week ago, ground controllers failed to notice a critical drop in the power supply

which shut down the station's motion-control computer. It took crew members two days to return the station to normal operation.

The aging space outpost has seen some recent improvements after a series of problems earlier this year. In a series of spacewalks, Russian cosmonauts Anatoly Solovyov and Pavel Vinogradov have restored Mir's power supply almost to what it was before a June collision with a cargo ship.

On Friday, the cosmonauts were busy installing a new carbon dioxide removal system. The old one, which has often failed, will stay as a back-up.

US astronaut David Wolf was studying flight manuals to prepare for a Dec. 5 spacewalk with Solovyov, during which the two plan to work on some scientific experiments outside the station, Medvedkova said.

Dozens of nations pledge \$ 37m for rebuilding tomb of Chernobyl N-reactor

NEW YORK, Nov 21: Dozens of nations on Thursday pledged an additional 37 million dollars toward rebuilding the rapidly deteriorating concrete tomb of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor scene of the world's worst nuclear accident in 1986, reports Reuters.

Officials said that money raised at a conference in New York will enable work to begin immediately on the Sarcophagus built in haste after the April 26, 1986 accident that spewed radioactive fallout across the Northern Hemisphere with consequence still being felt more than 11 years later.

"Let us, the community of nations begin a new journey, an historic journey for a more secure and safe future for Chernobyl," US Vice President Al Gore said in a speech to delegates from more than 40 countries.

Austria extends visa for Gaddafi's son amid boycott

VIENNA, Austria, Nov 21: Faced with a Libyan boycott of Austrian industry, Austria has revoked a decision not to extend the student visa of Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi's son, described earlier as a "security risk," reports AP.

When Said Gaddafi's visa to study economics in the Austrian capital expired recently, authorities refused to prolong it, the daily Die Presse reported in its Friday edition made available to The Associated Press.

Austrian television, which picked up the newspaper report, said it was confirmed by the Austrian Foreign Ministry.

The Austrian decision infuriated the Libyan leader, who imposed a strict travel ban on Austrians, Die Presse said.

Tories suffer setback in election

LONDON, Nov 21: The main opposition Conservative Party suffered a set back Friday when it lost one of its safest parliamentary districts after a special election, and won a second with a reduced majority, reports AP.

The minor Liberal Democrat Party won the wealthy Winchester parliamentary seat, 65 miles (100 kilometers) southwest of London, with a large 21,556 majority and a swing against the Conservatives of 25.9 per cent.

Liberal Democrat candidate Mark Oaten won, 37,006 votes compared to former Conservative minister Gerry Malone's 15,450. The candidate from Tony Blair's governing Labour Party won just 944 votes.

The result indicated that voters supporting either Labour or the Liberal Democrats are willing to vote tactically to defeat Conservatives in districts which have traditionally voted Tory, a move which if repeated nationwide could end Conservative dominance of British politics.

Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown said the vote was a rejection of claims that the Conservatives were recovering after heavy defeat in May 1 national elections and the resignation of former leader John Major.

"There really are no glass ceilings for the Liberal Democrats," said Ashdown.

In Beckenham, southeast London, the Conservatives won the seat with a reduced majority of 1,227. Conservative candidate Jacqui Lait won 13,152 votes to beat the second placed Labour candidate Bob Hughes, who gained 11,935.

Voting in both elections took place Thursday.

The election in Beckenham was called after Conservative lawmaker Piers Merchant resigned on Oct. 14 following a sex scandal with an 18-year-old girl. The Winchester special election was called following legal action after May 1 elections, when the Liberal Democrat candidate won by just two votes.

Abacha may free Abiola

LAGOS, Nov 21: Detained Nigerian presidential claimant Moshood Abiola is on a list of 75 political prisoners who may be freed by military ruler General Sani Abacha, a local newspaper reported today, says Reuters.

The Independent Vanguard quoted a member of a special committee, set up by the presidency to scrutinise detainees, as saying the final decision would be taken by Abacha.

The committee began work on Thursday and was expected to pass on its recommendations to Abacha today, the paper

said, adding that the detainees might be freed at the weekend.

Abacha, in a nation-wide broadcast on Monday to mark his four years in office, promised to release detainees — but not those who posed a threat to peace and security.

Millionaire businessman Abiola, widely believed to have won an annulled 1993 poll meant to restore democracy, has been among dozens of political prisoners since 1994, when he declared himself president based on results of the annulled poll.

Winnie to appear at public hearing of Truth Commission next week

JOHANNESBURG, Nov 21: After all the accusations, counter-claims and conspiracy theories, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela finally is getting her long-demanded chance to tell her side of the story, reports AP.

The ex-wife of President Nelson Mandela will appear next week at a public hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is looking into 18 cases of alleged murders, kidnappings and torture by her bodyguards in the 1980s.

Beginning Monday, testimony from allies and foes, police and clergy, politicians and township street dwellers is likely to repeat past accusations, but could uncover new information on up to eight murders and other alleged crimes.

Her bodyguards, known as the Mandela United Football Club, created such havoc in the Sweto black township that former friends and anti-apartheid allies turned against the woman once called the "mother of the nation." Jerry Richardson, her chief bodyguard, is serving a life sentence for murder.

For Winnie Mandela, the

hearing is a chance to publicly confront the dogged accusations and keep her public profile high before next month's national conference of the governing African National Congress.

As president of the ANC Women's League, she is running to become the party's deputy president — a post that could make her deputy president of the country after the 1999 national election.

Singapore lifts ban on Mao's book

SINGAPORE, Nov 21: Singapore today lifted restrictions on a book on China's late revolutionary leader Mao Zedong, saying it was no longer objectionable, reports Reuters.

In a notice today, the Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA) said it was ending restrictions on five publications, among them the "selected works of Mao Zedong" and two magazines from China, China reconstructs and Peking review.

"These publications are no longer objectionable on moral, religious or communal grounds," MITA said.

Violence still dominates way of life in Karachi

KARACHI, Pakistan, Nov 21: It was three in the morning and Ghazala waited anxiously in the bridal room for her new husband Tariq to show up. He never did, reports Reuters.

A few hours later, he was found dead with multiple bullet wounds, less than a mile from the home where his 25-year-old bride was spending her solitary wedding night.

Two weeks later, Ghazala, family members and the police are still clueless as to why Tariq, 31, was first tortured and then shot dead.

This is Karachi. The city of 12 million is the financial capital of Pakistan, the country's only port, and for over a decade, a virtual war zone.

According to the Asian Development Bank, it will soon join the list of overcrowded megacities of Asia that will double their population — and with it their crime rate — by 2025.

Tariq became another sorry statistic in the long list of daily murder cases, another faceless victim of the ethnic, sectarian and political violence that has ravaged this city.

"The roots of violence go deep in Pakistan. They have been nourished by our recent history," the prestigious Dawn newspaper said in an editorial last week.

They are also connected to the general breakdown of administrative, especially law enforcement, machinery in the country as a whole," it said.

But the death of a poor clerk like Tariq attracts little attention, unlike the March 1995 killing of two US consulate employees.

Or last Wednesday's rush-hour slaying of four American oil workers and their Pakistani driver, shot dead as they sat in

their car. There is, however, a common thread to the killings of both rich and poor. They almost always go unsolved and last week's shooting is typical.

"We have made a video of the place of the incident, got the sketches of the suspects, recorded the statements, recovered the car used in the attack... but I am afraid no breakthrough has been made yet," a police official said.

Almost 400 people have died so far this year, over 500 died in 1996 and 2,000 lost their lives in 1995. But the causes of the violence are almost as varied as the backgrounds of the victims.

Police blame the daily shooting incidents on local groups such as the Mohajir National Movement (MQM) which has been waging a bloody urban war with the Haqqi splinter faction.

Police estimate that several thousands have died in Karachi since 1986 when ethnic riots broke out between the Urdu-speaking Mohajirs — who fled to Pakistan after the partition of the Sub-continent in 1947 — and emigrants from other provinces of the country.

Other killings are put down simply to personal enmities, but the more serious attacks are often linked to foreign groups.

Some bomb blasts have been blamed by authorities on agents of the Indian intelligence outfit, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).

But attacks on Americans and Iranians are seen as the work of groups linked to extremist Arab Islamists or Afghan-based factions who also enjoy support of some of the local Islamist parties.

Residents say the violence surged only after Pakistan,

along with the United States, began funding anti-Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the early 1980s.

Once the war was won, Afghan veterans poured into Pakistan and local newspapers have criticised the police and intelligence agencies in Karachi for making little effort in tracking down the renegades.

The News daily in its Friday edition carried a story accusing Pakistani secret services officials of going soft on Afghan war veterans.

"While Americans had no problem turning their guns against their former comrades in the war against the Soviet Union, it was impossible for the Pakistani security officials to show a similar response."

"In this part of the world it is difficult to break linkages once formed," the newspaper quoted a security official as saying.

To this day, Pakistan is accused of funding the hardline Taliban movement, who now control two-thirds of Afghanistan. Islamabad denies the charges and blames Iran of supporting the anti-Taliban coalition.

Residents point to the attacks on Americans and Iranians as symptomatic of the continuing link with the Afghan crisis.

Financial analysts say Pakistan will lose much of its drive for foreign investment and domestic political stability if it does not set its house in order.

"We need to get down in earnest to badly needed administrative reforms, not so much for how this might affect our international image but for the sake of making the country a better governed place," the Dawn editorial said.



South African President Nelson Mandela, left, talks to Indonesian President Suharto in front of his office in Cape Town, Thursday. The two met to discuss the East Timor issue. — AP/UNB photo