

## International

# UF rules out patch-up with Cong(I)

NEW DELHI, Dec 3: India's outgoing coalition government today ruled out a patch-up with former ally Congress (I) which toppled the administration when it withdrew support last week, reports AFP.

"There is no solution in sight" for the crisis caused by Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's resignation November 28 after the Congress withdrew its legislative support. Devarajwani Raja of the Communist Party of India, a coalition member, said.

The Congress' bid for a patch-up with us is a futile exercise.

"Yes, the Congress people are talking to us, both over the telephone and in formal meetings. But there cannot be a patch-up. How can we believe them any more?" Raja told AFP.

"The only way out is fresh elections to parliament."

His comments came a day after two Congress leaders, Madhavrao Scindia and Arjun Singh, held a closed-door meeting with Harkishan Singh Sur-

jeet, a prominent Communist leader of the United Front in a desperate bid to cobble together a new coalition government to avoid elections.

They reportedly informed Suryajeet that the Congress could again prop up Gujral's coalition if it dumped a member party — the DMK — which has been linked with Sri Lankan Tamil guerrillas blamed for killing former Congress premier Rajiv Gandhi in 1991.

Newspapers said the two Congress leaders also wanted Prime Minister Gujral replaced by G K Moopanar, a former Congress stalwart now with the United Front.

"This is an impossible demand," said Raja, what crime has Gujral committed that he should be removed? Today if we agree to that tomorrow the Congress will ask for something else.

"As for the DMK, there can be no compromise. No DMK, no government."

The Congress admitted today its negotiations with the United

Front were floundering but added there was still a ray of hope.

"We are prepared to negotiate," Congress spokesman Vithal Gadgil said. "We can consider any proposal provided they drop DMK, talks are going on, but the United Front is adamant on the DMK issue."

Gadgil admitted that with the belligerent Hindu nationalists also trying to put together a coalition of their own, the political crisis cannot drag on.

"Today or tomorrow, things will be finalised one way or another."

Indian President K R Narayanan, who asked Gujral to continue in office until a new government could be formed or elections organised, is talking to politicians and constitutional experts.

Both the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) and the Congress — the largest and second-largest groups in the hung parliament — have staked claim to form a government.

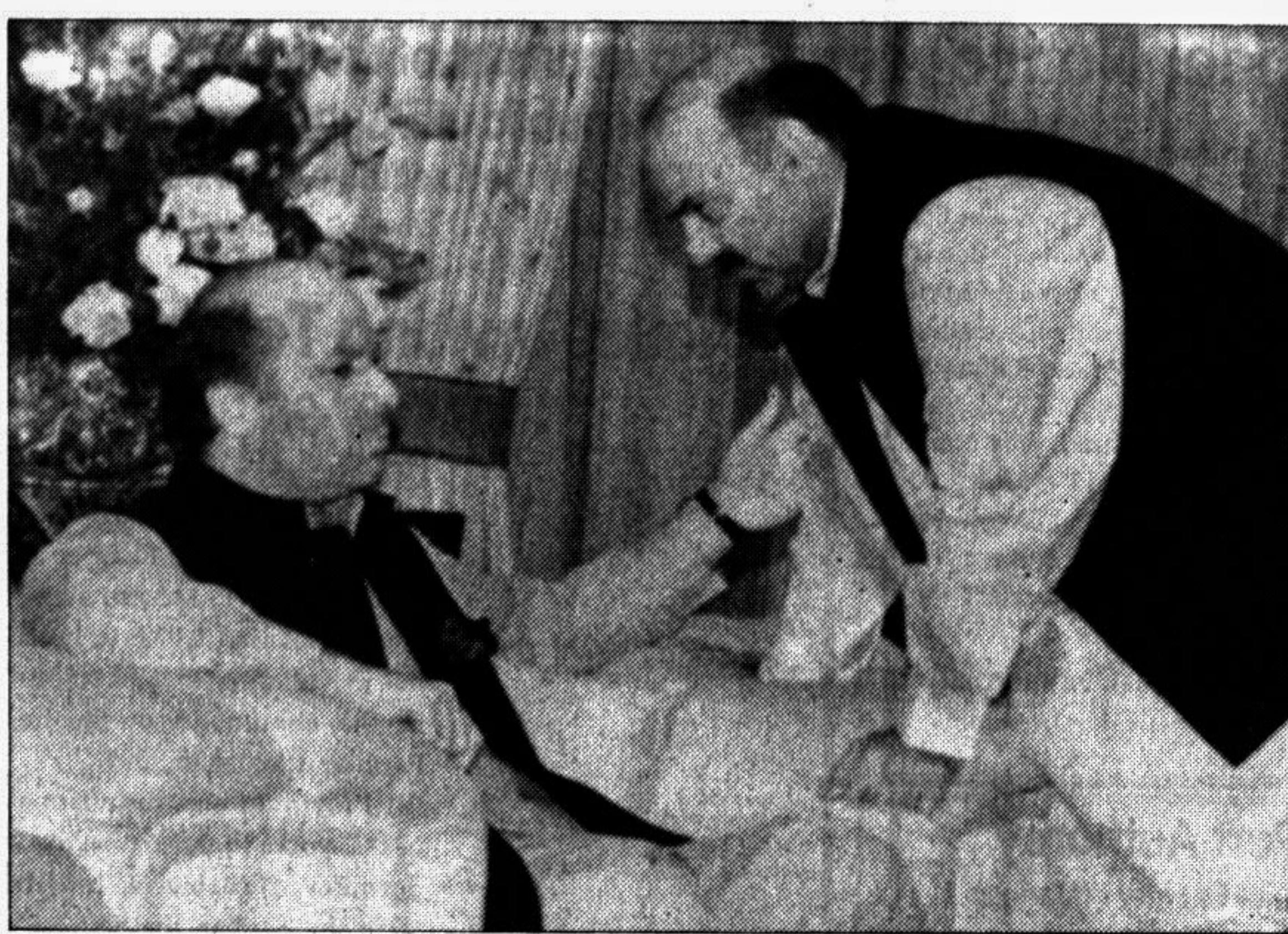
## Clinton to visit India, Pakistan despite crisis

WASHINGTON, Dec 3: President Clinton will proceed with plans to visit India and Pakistan next year despite political turmoil in both countries, the White House said Tuesday, reports AP.

"The president often travels to countries which are undergoing changes of leadership," White House spokesman Mike McCurry said. "I'm not aware of any change in the president's plans to travel next year."

The White House has not specified the timing of the trip. Leaving room for events to cool, McCurry said the administration wants a trip "that would be fruitful and productive from the viewpoint of engaging with the leadership of both countries."

In Pakistan, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif triumphed in a political feud over his two top rivals, suspending the chief justice in a move that prompted the surprise resignation of President Farooq Ahmed Leghari. Leghari accused Sharif of trying to grab sole power and thwarting attempts to end the



Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, left, in conversation with his brother Shahbaz Sharif, Chief Minister of Punjab province, Tuesday. President Farooq Ahmed Leghari who was opposed to Sharif resigned Tuesday rather than appoint a new chief justice.

— AP/UNB photo

## Police foil anti-Israeli suicide bomb attack

# Independent Palestinian state will be established in '99: Arafat

JERUSALEM, Dec 3: Palestinian National Authority (PNA) President Yasser Arafat yesterday stressed that an independent Palestinian state will be established in 1999, reports Xinhua.

Speaking at a news conference after his meeting with visiting Jordanian Prime Minister Abdul-Salam Majali in the West Bank city of Ramallah, Arafat said that he hopes Jerusalem will be the capital of the Palestinian state.

Arafat also asked Jordan's King Hussein to ensure the implementation of the Hebron accord signed by PNA and Israel in January which included three-phased, once-a-half-year troop pull-back from West

Majali underlined principles of Jordan's position, which committed Jordan to supporting the Palestinians and their efforts to build national institutions and establish their state with Jerusalem as its capital.

The two sides also discussed the latest developments of the peace process on the Israeli-Palestinian track and Israel's latest decision on a conditional troop pull-back from West

AFP add, Palestinian police said Tuesday they had foiled a massive anti-Israeli suicide bomb attack after capturing a militant with more than 100 kilograms (220 pounds) of explosives.

Palestinian secret service chiefs Amin Hindi and General Tawfiq Tlawi said police had arrested a member of the left-wing Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) at Rafat near the West Bank town of Nablus.

They said PFLP militant Zahran Abu Osba, a student at Annajah University near Nablus, had admitted after his arrest that he wanted to detonate the explosives "in a place packed with Israeli civilians."

Osba's brother, 25-year-old Badran Abu Osba, was member of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) who blew himself up on November 21 in his house at Rafat while he was handling explosives.

Rafat, which is under Israeli security control, is considered a bastion of Islamic fundamentalism. Hama's former chief bomb-maker Yehiya Ayyash, who was killed in Amman, headed the Islamic Resistance services last year, came from the village.

Richardson made a similar attempt last month with the two Mideast leaders, but the slowdown in peacemaking persists although the Israeli Cabinet on Sunday approved in principle ceding more territory to the Palestinian Authority.

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