

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. Deviswamy 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 Surjeet 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.

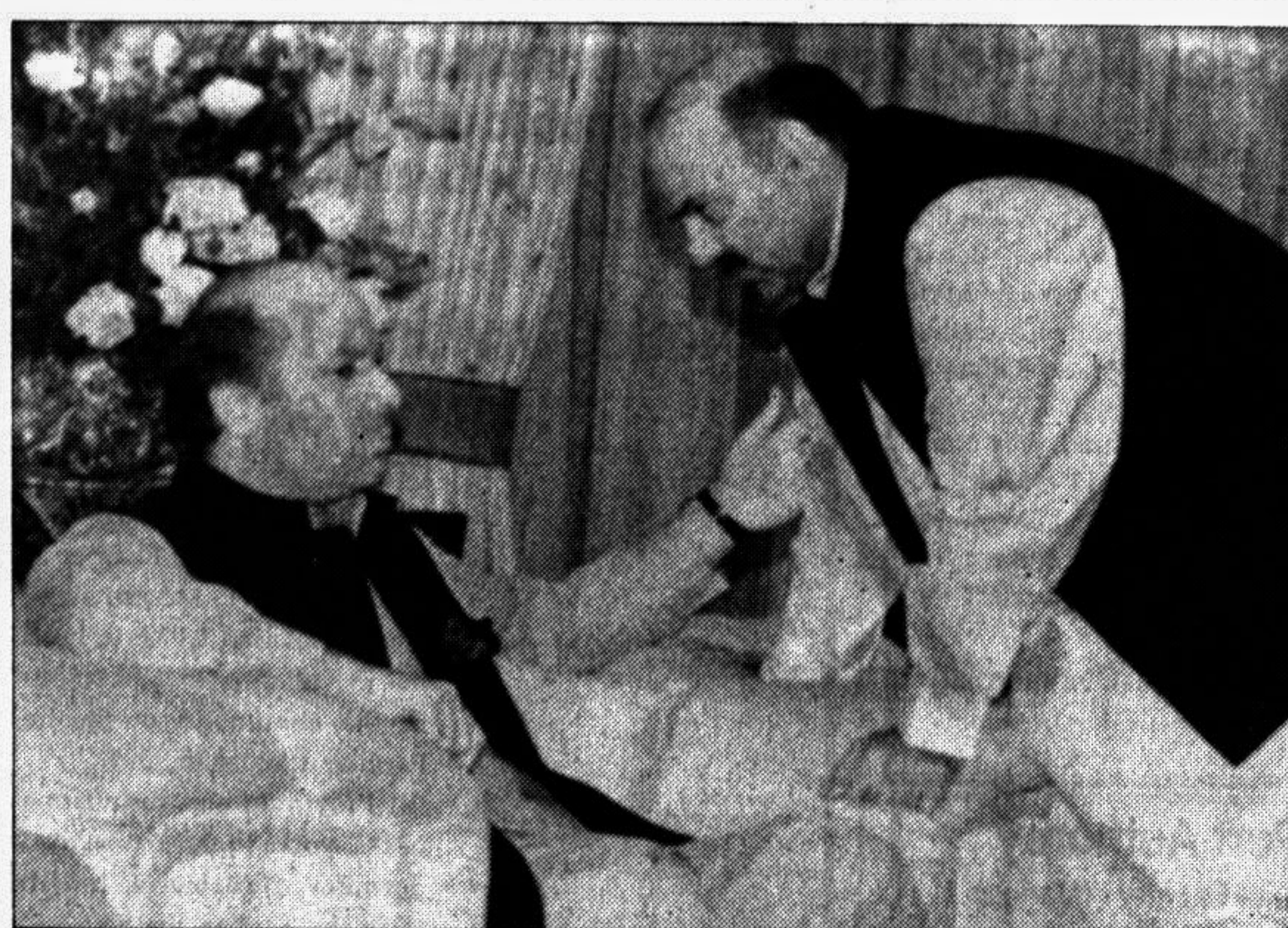
Both the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian People's Party and the Congress — the largest and second-largest groups in the hung parliament — have staked claim to form a government.

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 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 feud by negotiation.



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

61 massacred in caste violence in Bihar

LAKSHMANPUR, Dec 3: An upper-caste army swept into a village in eastern India in the dead of night and shot dead at least 61 people, police said Tuesday, reports AP.

The massacre took place at Lakshmanpur, a village comprised mostly of low caste farmers, 120 kilometres (75 miles) from Patna, the Bihar state capital.

Police blamed the Ranbir Sena, an illegal private army composed mostly of upper-caste landowners who have terrorised the region. Low-caste villagers in Bihar have fought back, often helped by communist guerrillas who promised to redistribute land among the peasants.

Police chief S K Saksena said the massacre occurred Monday night when most of the residents of Lakshmanpur were asleep in their homes. At least 300 armed men descended on the isolated village, entered homes and methodically shot and stabbed victims for two hours.

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 Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank.

Early last month, Arafat said that PNA will declare statehood in 1999 if need be unilaterally at the end of the five-year interim period of autonomy. His words set off a wave of strong reaction from Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday that if Arafat unilaterally declares a Palestinian state, he will announce the annexation of the Jordan Valley and other territories in response.

During yesterday's meeting,

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

Albright to hold talks with Arafat, Netanyahu

WASHINGTON, Dec 3: US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will hold back-to-back meetings in Europe this week with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Her aim is to prod the two sides into productive negotiations over the future of the West Bank, reports AP.

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

Bank.

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 Tawfik Tirawi 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 a 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. Hamas's former chief-bomb maker Yehiyya Ayash, who was killed in an attack on the Israeli security services last year, came from the village.

'Winnie ordered killings of police informers'

JOHANNESBURG, Dec 3: Winnie Madikizela-Mandela ordered the killings of suspected police informers in the late 1980s, her former chief bodyguard told South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Wednesday, reports AP.

Convicted murderer Jerry Richardson said his hands were full blood from carrying out orders from President Nelson Mandela's ex-wife to kill informants, a term anti-apartheid activists used to mean police informers.



Richardson said he was an informant for the apartheid government. You would just have to kill the person," Richardson said.

When asked who issued the orders for such killings, he responded, "Mami," his nickname for Madikizela-Mandela, known at the time as the "mother of the nation."

In his written statement to the commission, Richardson described how Madikizela-Mandela ordered an associate to "dump" two enemies, which Richardson said was the euphemism for killing them.

Richardson is serving a life sentence for the murder of 14-year-old activist Stompie Seipei in 1989. Tony Richard, Richardson's lawyer, said his client would admit to killing Seipei and others.

On Monday, Richardson carried an embroidered cloth he made in prison that said "Jerry v/s Winnie."

The Truth Commission is investigating 18 human rights abuses including murder and torture — by Madikizela-Mandela's gang, known as the Mandela United Football Club.

While the club, led by Richardson, played soccer matches, it was allegedly caused such havoc in the Soweto black township in the late 1980s that residents burned Madikizela-Mandela's house and the mainstream anti-apartheid leadership distanced itself from Madikizela-Mandela, one of its most prominent figures and the wife at the time of its greatest hero, the imprisoned Mandela.

US opposes Farrakhan's visit to Iraq, Libya

WASHINGTON, Dec 3: The State Department said Tuesday it opposes a planned trip by black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan to Iraq and Libya, arguing that those regimes will use the visit for propaganda purposes, reports AP.

Aides to the Nation of Islam leader met with State Department officials Monday to discuss Farrakhan's visits to the two countries Washington considers "rogue" states.

"We made clear that a visit by minister Farrakhan to Libya and Iraq would not be helpful, and we are, therefore, opposed to him going," State Department spokesman James Rubin said.

Under US Law, the use of a US passport is prohibited in Iraq and Libya but travel to these countries is not considered illegal.

Noting that Iraq and Libya are under sanctions, Rubin said they have yet to comply with international demands.

Over 200 Chinese miners killed in November

BEIJING, Dec 3: More than 200 Chinese coal miners have been killed in four separate explosions in November, officials said Tuesday, 73 of them in two incidents on the same day, Xinhua reported, reports AP.

In the first official confirmation the news agency quoting the Labour Ministry and the state economic and trade commission said 45 miners died Thursday in a blast at the state-owned Xie'er mine in eastern Huainan city.

Another 28 died in Jiaoping mine on the same day, also because of a gas explosion, it said.

The two mines are in the same province, Anhui.

Chinese officials earlier Tuesday refused to confirm the casualties at the Xie'er mine saying only that a blast had occurred.

It was the third deadly blast in the province in less than two weeks, after 89 miners were killed when a blast ripped through the state-owned Pan-shan mine on November 13, Xinhua said.

Congo massacre UN team to begin long-delayed investigation

KINSHASA, Dec 3: UN investigators prepared Tuesday to begin a long-delayed inquiry into allegations that the forces of President Laurent Kabila massacred thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees, reports AP.

Team spokesman Jose Diaz said a small advance crew planned to leave Kinshasa on Wednesday, headed to the western city of Mbandaka, where UN officials say Hutu refugees reportedly were massacred in full view of townspeople.

The team's work has been delayed for months, with UN and Congolese officials arguing over the nature and scope of the inquiry. Kabila, who captured Kinshasa in May, said repeatedly he had no objection to the UN investigation, but effectively blocked it each time it tried to begin.

Last week, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced he would withdraw the team.

Nepali Cong dominates coalition govt

KATMANDU, Dec 3: Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa inducted 23 more ministers into his government Wednesday, giving the tiny Himalayan nation a jumbo 47-member Cabinet, reports AP.

All 23 lawmakers were from the powerful Nepali Congress, which helped Thapa topple the earlier communist-dominated government.

Two months ago, Thapa's National Democratic Party walked out of the ruling coalition, apparently irked by the domination of communists in the government. He became Nepal's fourth prime minister in three years.

It then aligned with two opposition parties, the Nepali Congress and the National Goodwill Party.

Five Congress lawmakers joined the government. Since then, the party has debated on who should join the government. Its conclave ended last month and authorized the party chief to pick the lawmakers.

Under the agreement hammered out in October, although the Congress has a majority, with 88 lawmakers, the prime minister would belong to the National Democratic Party.

Thapa's coalition commands the support of 111 lawmakers in 205-member lower house of Parliament. The Communist Party of Nepal

(Marxist-Leninist) is the biggest group, controlling 89 seats, one more than the Nepali Congress. Thapa's Nepal Democratic Party has 20 seats and the Nepali Congress Party three. The rest are independents.

The important portfolios of finance and foreign affairs are held by Ravindra Nath Sharma and Kamal Thapa of the National Democratic Party.

On Wednesday, Khum Bahadur Khadka of the Nepali Congress was appointed as the home minister.

The Cabinet has 28 ministers from the Nepali Congress Party, 17 from Prime Minister Thapa's party and two from the Nepal Goodwill Party.

The cabinet has only one woman minister — Meena Pandey of the Nepali Congress.

AFP adds, an understanding was reached that a government would be formed under the leadership of Thapa who would rule for a year before handing over to the NC which would conduct the next general elections an AC party source said.

As part of the deal the coalition cabinet has been expanded to include more NC members because Thapa knew if he did not, the NC would withdraw its support, the source said.

Since the 1994 election which resulted in a hung parliament, Nepal had four coalition administrations.

BRIEFLY

Arafat to visit Iran after 15 yrs: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will make his first visit to Iran in over 15 years to attend the summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), officials said on Tuesday, AFP reports from Gaza City.

Arafat, who is OIC Vice-president, will leave for Tehran on Monday for the three-day summit, which starts on December 9, his political adviser Nabil Abu Rudeina told AFP. He will deliver a speech to the summit "calling on Islamic nations to create a mechanism to support Jerusalem and exert greater efforts to save the holy city from Israeli plans to Judaize it," Abu Rudeina said.

Hutus free 103 prisoners in Rwanda: Hutu rebels attacked a village in northwest Rwanda Tuesday, freeing 103 prisoners from the jail, killing two public employees, sacking a health center and abducting two nurses Radio Rwanda said, AFP reports from Kogali.

Five other persons were missing from the village of Rwerere in the Gisenyi prefecture after the dawn attack by the Interahamwe rebels, whose number was not given in the government radio report. It said the Rwandan Patriotic Army (APR) intervened and forced the rebels toward the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), ex-Zaire.

Monkeypox outbreak breaks in Congo: Ending smallpox vaccinations has led to the largest-ever reported outbreak of monkeypox, a similar and potentially fatal disease, according to the World Health Organisation, AP reports from Geneva.

So far, at least 511 suspected cases of monkeypox have struck children younger than eight in a remote section of the Congo, and about 10 children have died, WHO said Tuesday. However, there are no signs the disease will spread to a wider area, WHO infectious disease expert David Heymann said.

Peru allows Red Cross back in prison: The government said Tuesday it will allow Red Cross officials to visit imprisoned guerrillas, reversing a ban imposed during the hostage crisis at the Japanese ambassador's residence, AP reports from Lima.

The visits will be allowed starting Monday, President Alberto Fujimori said. The government had cited security reasons for cutting off visits by the International Red Cross to rebel prisoners during the 126-day hostage taking by leftist rebels.

UK video artist wins Turner Prize: Video artist Gillian Wearing won the 1997 Turner Prize, Britain's prestigious award for younger artists, on Tuesday, AP says from London.

Wearing, who receives 20,000 pounds (33,600 dollars), was chosen from a shortlist of four — all of whom were women this year. The 34-year-old artist won for pieces that included 60 Minutes Silence, an hour-long video of police officers posing as if for a group photo and growing increasingly restless.

Nazi gold confce spurs countries to examine their own role in Holocaust

LONDON, Dec 3: For many nations, the first global conference on Nazi gold is already a partial success because it has spurred countries to examine their own roles in the Holocaust, sometimes with painful results, reports AP.

A dozen countries — including Belgium, Argentina, Turkey and France — have established historical commissions not only to investigate Nazi gold but to look at broader dealings with Nazi Germany.

"1997 has truly been a year of discovery," said US Undersecretary of State Stuart Eizenstat, head of the American delegation at the 41-nation conference, which ends Thursday.

The Swiss, who have been the major target of criticism for

accepting millions of dollars in stolen Nazi gold, produced an interim report by a panel of historians on the eve of the conference.

It said that private Swiss banks received 61.2 million dollars in Nazi gold, three times the amount the Allies estimated in 1946. Historian Jean-Francois Bergier, who heads the panel, told the conference the Swiss National Bank must have been aware as early as 1941 that they were dealing in looted gold — yet they did nothing.

Eizenstat called these revelations "very candid and very courageous" and said more must be done to declassify documents and open archives so the full story of the Holocaust can be told.

"No one can ever return to the victims and their families their wrecked lives, their murdered relatives, their homes and their hopes. But together we can seek and uncover the truth," said Lord Janner, the British lawmaker who persuaded Britain to host the conference.

Prof Horst Moller of the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich told the conference Tuesday that many German records on Nazi gold transfers were accessible in the West, but were lost or scattered at home.

To date, he said, German gold transfers have been primarily reconstructed on the basis of Swiss National Bank records and available German and American records.

"Many foreign institutions were given the opportunity to keep their participation in these transactions secret," Moller said.

In order to produce "a truly comprehensive picture" of the movement of Nazi gold, he called for the declassification of all records from Swiss private banks, from Germany's allies, from the countries it occupied, and from neutral countries, especially Sweden, Portugal, Spain and Turkey.

"It is important that every country and every entity that is represented here whether in participant or observer status, make available their records," echoed Eizenstat.

Although he didn't identify any countries, his comments appeared to be partly aimed at the Vatican, which has observer status at the conference and sealed archives.

Both Moller and Eizenstat urged that records of the Tripartite Gold Commission — which the Allies established after the war to distribute looted Nazi gold — be opened immediately.

But Eizenstat said Britain and France want to wait until the commission is wound up, hopefully soon, because of concerns about confidentiality.

Over the last 50 years, the commission has returned more than 300 tons of gold to 10 countries whose treasuries were sacked. Britain, France and the United States — which run the commission — have proposed that nations with rights to the

remaining 5.5 tons of looted gold give up their claims so it can be used to compensate individual victims.

At the start of the conference, the United States and Britain launched a new fund for victims of Nazi persecution with nearly 6 million dollars. The United States hopes to offer up to 25 million dollars over three years, if Congress approves. Argentina and Luxembourg will also contribute.

Eizenstat said finding the Reichsbank accounts, particularly the SS accounts, would provide "greater definitiveness" of just how much gold was looted from Holocaust victims.

The Swiss said 2.5 million dollars was taken from concentration camp victims.



Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi and his wife Safiya (second left) meet with Linda McCathern (seated) of Portland, Oregon on Tuesday. McCathern was reunited with her twin daughters Sarrah (third left) and Jamelah (hidden behind Sarrah) for the first time in nine years after Gadhafi personally approved her return. — AP/UNB photo

Off the Record

Gorbachev as a model?

MOSCOW: Mikhail Gorbachev is remembered for many things. Soon the last Soviet leader may also be known as the man who gave his country American pizza, reports AP.

Gorbachev shot a television commercial for Pizza Hut last week at one of its restaurants in Moscow.

He agreed to star in the ad because his Gorbachev Foundation badly needs money to buy the building where his library and archive is housed, foundation spokesman Karen Karagezian said Tuesday. The organisation now rents the Moscow building.

The spokesman said he didn't know how much Gorbachev was being paid. "But I would think that the amount is significant because it is to be used to buy real estate."

His 10-year-old granddaughter, Anastasia, also has a part in the commercial, said Karagezian.

The manager of the Pizza Hut restaurant where the commercial was made said Gorbachev came for two of the three days of filming, staying only for about a half and hour each time.

"I guess he's a very popular person in the West, so they wanted him for the commercial," said Manager Sergei Tatoyan.

The manager said he wasn't sure what role the former Soviet leader plays in the commercial, which he said will not be shown in Russia, where Gorbachev is widely disliked and blamed for the Soviet collapse.

Pornographic cartoons!

BANGKOK: Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai has ordered a crackdown on publishers and purveyors of pornographic cartoons who sell their seamy sketches near schools, reports AP.

Deputy Education Minister Somsak Prisananthakul said Chuan ordered both the education and interior ministries to use short-term measures, such as tax codes, against pornographic cartoon publishers and book store operators that sell to children, the newspaper The Nation reported.

Somsak said the campaign would last three months, and if it was not effective, unspecified long-term measures would be adopted.

Pornographic materials are easily obtainable in Thailand, vendors selling pornographic videotapes line the major avenues of Bangkok's central business district.

Women only show on lovemaking

COLOMBO: Women packed a Sri Lankan theatre when it barred men from special shows of a feature film that focuses on lovemaking, reports AP.

"It was such a good feeling," said Sujatha de Silva after watching one of last week's women-only screenings of "Kama Sutra" at Colombo's Sabay theatre. The film based on the fourth-century Indian sex manual has won both critical acclaim and controversy.

"Since all of us were women, there was no embarrassment to watch some of the very sensual scenes," de Silva said. "I would not have seen the movie if there were men inside the hall."

Savoy manager David Joseph said women feared they would be exposing themselves to suggestive comments or more serious harassment if they had watched the film with men. After receiving a call from a woman who wanted to know just how explicit the movie was, he talked his bosses into barring men from one of three daily showings last Wednesday through Friday.

Joseph had to seek special permission from the government to discriminate against men for one show a day. Even his male staff members weren't allowed to enter the theatre once the women-only afternoon screenings began.

"Judging by the number of phone calls I am getting, I can tell you that those who missed it would like to watch it, provided we offer the same facility," Joseph said.

Almost all the Savoy's 948 seats were full for the women-only shows. The regular shows also have been nearly sold-out, but few women go to those.

"Kama Sutra" was honoured as one of the 10 best movies of the Toronto film festival in 1996 and has since been shown around the world — but not yet in India, the country where it was made and the homeland of its director, Mira Nair.