

## International

Sanctions to remain in place : US

## Saddam orders mobilisation of volunteers to fight for Iraq

BAGHDAD, Jan 18: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein ordered the "mobilisation" of volunteers to prepare Iraq for a possible confrontation with the United States Saturday after threatening to give UN arms inspectors a six-month ultimatum to leave Baghdad, reports AFP.

Iraq should "recruit as many people for training as possible" in an operation to cover "the whole of Iraq and be led by the ruling Baath Party," Saddam said.

The training would be organised on an "entirely voluntary basis and would involve no compulsion," he told a meeting of the Baath Party leadership which was also attended by Defence Minister Sultan Hashem Ahmed.

He said the move had been made necessary by "the fact that our enemies... America and Zionism continue to act on the path of evil and to seek the slightest pretext to achieve the vile objectives of their sick minds."

"It is desirable to have at our disposal under the banner of

the Baath Party as many volunteers as possible," he said.

The move followed a defiant address to the Iraqi people broadcast by Iraqi television earlier in the day in which Saddam scoffed at US warnings of a military strike and threatened to give UN arms inspectors a six-month ultimatum to leave Baghdad.

Another report says, Saddam Hussein went back on Saturday to the "House" where he stayed when Gulf War allies launched their air raids against Iraq, the official INA news agency reported.

INA said the president had gone into the building which he called the "house of the faith" and had "recalled all the details" of the beginning of the Gulf War.

On that occasion, he had slit the throats of several sheep outside the house which "is still intact," INA said, adding that the house was "in the heart of Baghdad."

The president also saw the instruments they used during the night when the war began,

including the video recorder which served to record one of his speeches and a radio on which he listened to world reports on the war.

He saw too the military uniform he wore and the kitchen utensils he used to prepare meals, INA said.

The house contained an oil lamp used by Saddam and a table on which he wrote a presidential decree ordering the words Allah Akbar to be added to the Iraqi flag.

Meanwhile, AP from Washington adds: Responding to new threats by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, the Clinton administration pledged Saturday that sanctions will remain in place against Iraq until Baghdad fully complies with UN resolutions.

"The only way that sanctions can be lifted is if Saddam Hussein ensures that his government cooperates with the UN under the terms the UN has set out and with the people the UN thinks are necessary," State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said.

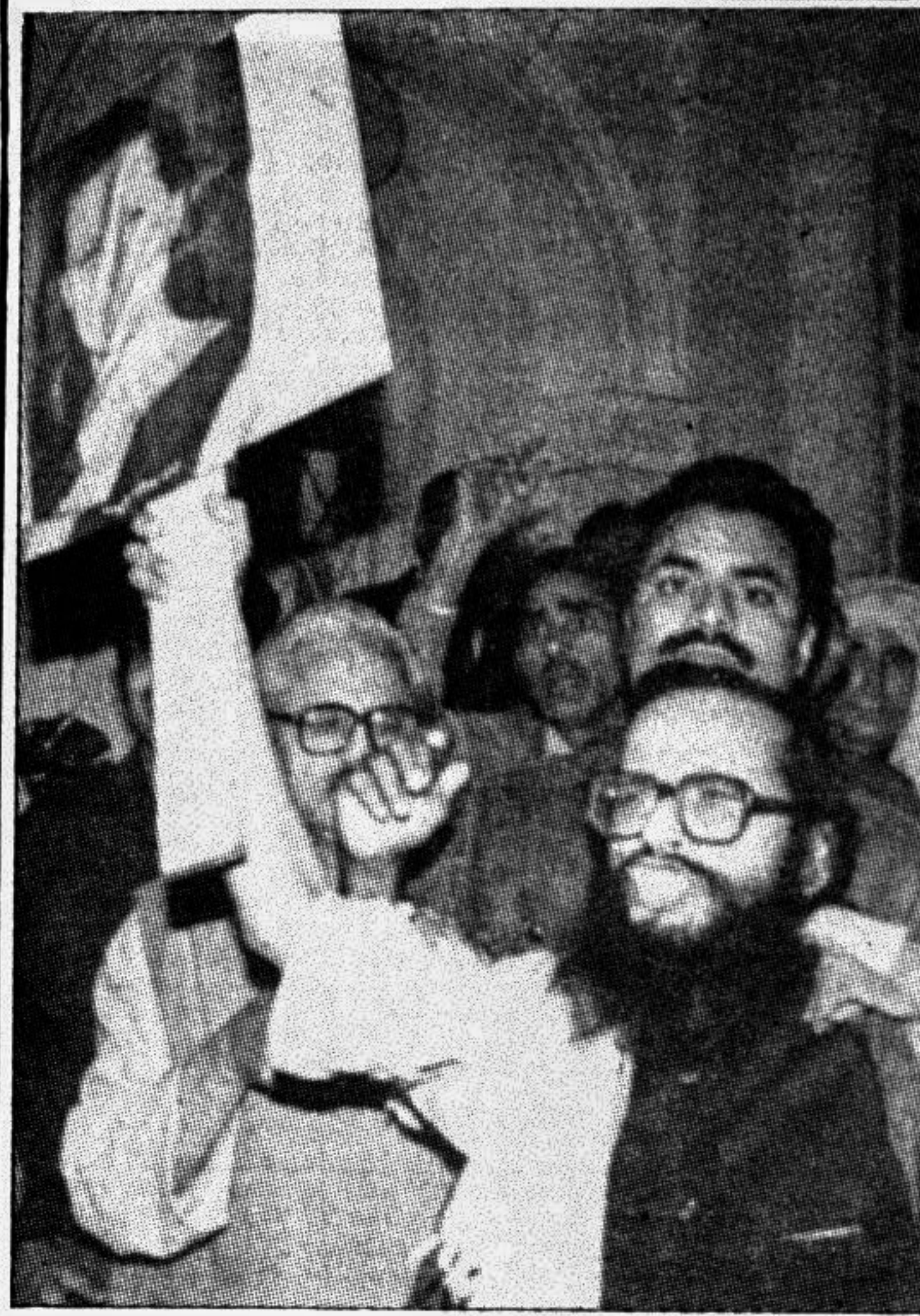
"It's not up to Iraq to dictate those terms," Rubin told The Associated Press. "If Saddam doesn't comply, he only has himself to blame for the continuation of the sanctions."

It is near the end of a "zoey day" for Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and a team of Middle East experts is waiting outside her office. Ahead is a period of both crisis and opportunity, and for the moment Albright's attention is fixed on the dangerous stalemate between Iraq and UN weapons inspectors.

"They must have been close to something on whether biological or chemical weapons were used on prisoners," Albright told The Associated Press in a wide-ranging interview marking the end of her first year on the job.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is "tightening the noose around himself," she said, personalising the conflict. "By not letting this inspection team go forward, in almost a strange way it's almost as if he has come close to saying, 'OK, you caught me.'"

## BRIEFLY



Congress Party supporters shout slogans in favour of Sonia Gandhi, and hold posters of the widow of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, in New Delhi Saturday. Sonia has started campaigning to boost the party image in the forthcoming elections. — AP/UNB photo

**Dengue fever cases rising in Malaysia:** The Malaysian government started a campaign in the state of Borneo Sunday to curtail the spread of dengue fever that has killed one person, the national news agency Bernama reported, AP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

This year, 64 cases of the mosquito-borne infection — characterised by the joint aches, rash and fever — have already been reported in Sibul, 1030 kilometres (64 miles) southeast of Kuala Lumpur in Sarawak state, Bernama said.

**16 students killed in China:** Sixteen students returning home for Lunar New Year celebrations were killed when their overloaded bus crashed down a ravine in southern China, the Life Times reported yesterday. AFP reports from Beijing.

The bus, which was carrying 64 passengers instead of the legal limit of 47, slid on ice in heavy fog and crashed down a 10 metre (30 foot) ravine in southern Guizhou province.

**India to set up Netaji Foundation:** The national committee for the birth centenary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose yesterday decided to set up a Netaji Foundation to perpetuate his ideals, PTI says from New Delhi.

The committee, which met under the chairmanship of Prime Minister I K Gujral, also decided to hold a public function on January 23 at Red Fort to conclude the celebrations.

**Rebels kidnap 6 in Philippines:** Philippine Muslim rebels raided a village and abducted six people in the southern Philippines late last week, police reports reaching Manila said yesterday. AFP reports from Manila.

The rebels, described as a lost command of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) released their hostage unharmed Thursday afternoon as police and military moved in on them, a police report said.

**Romanian PM to face no-confidence:** Romanian President Emil Constantinescu announced Saturday that Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea's government would face a confidence vote in parliament on Wednesday, AFP reports from Bucharest.

In a speech broadcast on television, Constantinescu said Ciorbea would submit his proposed reforms to parliament and his government would have to resign if a vote of no-confidence were passed against these proposals.

**17 die in Chinese factory blast:** Seventeen people were killed in an explosion in a makeshift Chinese fireworks factory. The Life Times reported yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

The illegal factory, in a four-roomed house in Susong county in eastern Anhui province, was in full operation producing explosives for the upcoming Lunar New Year when a spark ignited a pile of crackers on January 11 All 17 people in the building were killed.

**'Border' gets best film award:** The film, "Border," won the best film award at the "Screen-Video Awards 1997" ceremony at the Andheri Sports Complex in Mumbai Saturday night, reports PTI from Mumbai.

Director of "Border," JP Dutta, won the award for the best director. The best actor award was bagged by Anil Kapoor for the film "Virasat", while the best actress award went to Madhuri Dixit for the film "Mrityudand".

**Blast kills 1 miner in Russia:** An explosion at a Russian coal mine in the arctic Vorkuta region killed at least one and injured five miners, officials said Sunday, AP reports from Moscow.

The blast occurred early Sunday when 49 miners were working inside the Tsentralnaya mine, the Emergency Situations Ministry reported. It said 22 miners, five of them injured, managed to reach the surface and brought out the body of one dead worker. Twenty-six other were trapped inside the mine.

## Bosnian Serb lawmakers elect new premier

BIJELJINA, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Jan 18: A bare majority of Bosnian Serb lawmakers elected a new, moderate premier early Sunday after hard-liners declared an end to a tumultuous legislative session and walked out, reports AP.

The Western-backed president, Biljana Plavsic, have been battling supporters of war crimes suspect Radovan Karadzic over the premiership for weeks, prompting top international peace envoy Carlos Westendorp to declare a Saturday deadline to elect a Cabinet.

The election of a new premier was to have helped solve the crisis paralysing the Bosnian Serb-ruled half of Bosnia, yet Sunday's election by a rump assembly was certain to further polarise the situation.

Around midnight, the hard-line Speaker of Parliament, Dragan Kalinic, ended the session and called for the Parliament to reconvene in seven days.

Plavsic and her supporters, who hold 43 of the Parliament's 83 seats, stayed while the opposing camp left. Forty-two voted for her candidate, Milorad Dodik, who did not have the right to take part in the vote.

"I have to congratulate the assembly because they have

taken a democratic decision," Westendorp said after the vote. "They have appointed a government with a majority and this government has promised to cooperate the solve the problems of Republika Srpska."

He said Dodik had promised to comply with the Dayton peace accord ending the war in the former Yugoslavia. "And the international community is ready to help him and the... people" of the Serb-ruled half of the country.

Plavsic nominated Dodik just hours before yesterday's parliamentary session started in the northeastern town of Bijeljina.

The Karadzic loyalists did their best to prevent the assembly from reaching a vote, with deputies lining up to deliver diatribes against Plavsic.

Westendorp had the right to name a premier himself. But it was not clear whether any internationally imposed premier could work without support from all the Serb parties.

Dodik, a 39-year-old businessman and opposition leader from Plavsic's stronghold of Banja Luka, has been involved in Bosnian politics since 1992.

## Cong(I) withholds 2nd list of candidates

NEW DELHI, Jan 18: The Congress Party Saturday night released the second list of 16 Lok Sabha candidates including the name of former union minister, Balam Jakkhar, but shortly afterwards decided to "withhold" the entire list, reports PTI.

The list, issued after a meeting of the Central Election Committee, was signed by AICC General Secretary, Oscar Fernandes, covered seven constituencies in Rajasthan, five from Punjab and one each from Goa, Mizoram, Manipur and Meghalaya.

Thirty minutes later, the party said it has decided to withhold the list but give no reasons for the sudden decision.

Prominent among the 16 names cleared by the CEC, which was presided over by party chief Sitaram Kesri, were former external affairs minister Natwar Singh (Bharatpur), Umrao Singh (Jalandhar), Capt Amerinder Singh (Patiala), Gurinder Singh Kairon (Taran Taran) and Jagmeet Singh Brar (Faridkot).

## Hutu rebels attack Burundi capital

BUJUMBURA, Burundi, Jan 18: Hutu rebels on Sunday attacked the Burundi capital, Bujumbura, with mortar and small-arms fire, witnesses said, reports AP.

Military sources said the fighting was heaviest in the northern suburb of Kanenge.

Army spokesman Eduard Nibigira said the army was battling to push the rebels back to the hills overlooking Bujumbura. Witnesses said they saw groups of rebel fighters running down the hills around a secondary school.

Sounds of gun-fire and mortar fire could be heard throughout the capital. Soldiers and army vehicles were rushing to the scene of fighting.

## Vote to choose new WHO head Jan 27

GENEVA, Jan 18: The executive committee of the World Health Organisation (WHO) is to decide within days whom it wants as its new head in a vote which will mark the end of a decade of controversial leadership by the Japanese director general, Hiroshi Nakajima, reports AP.

Norway's former prime minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, is widely considered the favourite to take over the five-year post when the 32 members of the committee hold a secret ballot on Jan 27 to decide their preferred candidate.

The general assembly for the Geneva-based UN agency, counting representatives from 191 member countries, is to consider the choice in May.

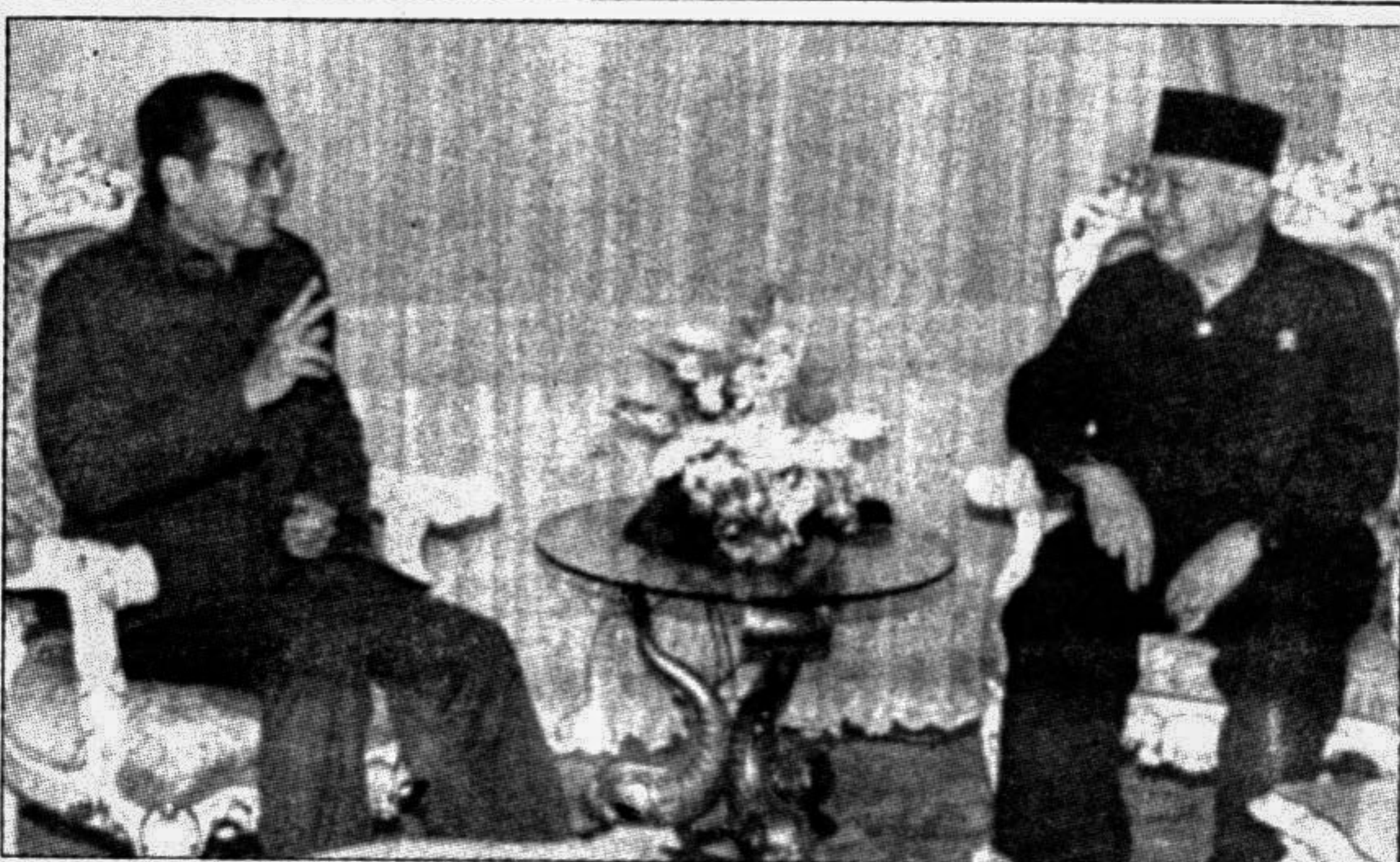
## 'Diana Garden' opens in Havana

HAVANA, Jan 18: A small garden with a slant centre-piece was opened in old Havana on the communist-ruled island of Cuba on Saturday in memory of Princess Diana, reports Reuters.

Havana's city historian Eusebio Leal, a member of the communist party's central committee, inaugurated the "Diana Garden" with the island crowned by an obelisk representing her burial place.

Leal, in a brief and solemn speech that extolled Diana's work with landmine victims and with the sick, called the obelisk a sign of life, and pointed to another sculpture in the garden which he said depicted a "radiant sun that triumphs."

Given how little they see of glossy magazines and tabloid newspapers that kept much of the world abreast of her every move, Cubans were surprisingly touched by Diana's death in a car crash in Paris in August last year.



Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad, left, chats with Indonesian President Suharto in Jakarta Saturday. Mahathir met with Suharto to discuss the regional economic crisis. — AP/UNB photo

## Sinn Fein blasts British-Irish plan for Northern Ireland

BELFAST, Jan 18: The IRA-ally Sinn Fein party on Saturday rejected a British-Irish plan for the future of Northern Ireland as "a serious mistake," reports AP.

"We are going to oppose, tooth and nail, any attempt by the British government to bring about an internal settlement within the north," said Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein's chief negotiator at the peace talks that continue Monday in Belfast.

It was Sinn Fein's bluntest and most critical public assessment of the plan, unveiled Monday by Britain and Ireland, that outlined the likely ground for compromise — between Catholics and pro-British Protestants in Northern Ireland.

The plan envisioned a law-making assembly in Belfast that would send representatives to a cross-border council. The council would promote joint decision-making between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

McGuinness, in a BBC interview, said the emphasis on creating a new lawmaking assembly within Northern Ireland, where Protestants and Catholics would be expected to share power, "has gone down very badly within Sinn Fein."

"We have not accepted the document as the basis for nego-

tiation. We are opposed to the document," he said, emphasizing that Sinn Fein will stay in the peace talks to push for what he called the "artificial statelet" of Northern Ireland be dismantled, not reformed.

The talks chairman, former US Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, said Tuesday that all eight participating parties had accepted the two governments' joint document as a basis for the negotiations.

Their two-page plan left unsettled the key question of the balance of power between the Belfast assembly and the cross-border council.

The Irish Republican Army,

## Iraqi diplomat killed in Jordan

BAGHDAD, Jan 18: Iraq's foreign ministry said today that an Iraqi diplomat, his wife and several Iraqi citizens were killed overnight in Jordan, reports AFP.

A ministry spokesman said Hekmat Al-Hejji, a senior diplomat, was assassinated in a "cowardly" act, the official INA news agency reported.

He called on the Jordanian authorities to immediately open an inquiry and identify those behind the attack.

## Israelis, Palestinians show no signs of drawing closer to dialogue

JERUSALEM, Jan 18: Israelis and Palestinians, separated by a gulf of mistrust, show no signs of drawing closer to dialogue on the eve of their leaders' meetings in Washington with US President Bill Clinton, reports AFP.

Each side has accused the other of violating their agreements, and they have each prepared lengthy documents to convince the United States of their own good faith in attempting to advance their deadlocked peace process.

The Palestinians hope that Clinton will arbitrate in a manner favourable to them while the Israelis want to limit the damage and avert a public disavowal from their US ally.

Clinton is scheduled to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Tuesday at the White House and with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat two days later in hopes of reviving the peace process which has barely moved since March 1997.

The gap between Israel and the Palestinians is so deep that no Arafat-Netanyahu meeting is planned even though the two men have not seen each other since October 8.

In a statement published Saturday, the Palestinian cabinet blamed Israel for the statement.

Arafat himself expressed hope the United States would pressure Netanyahu.

"My greatest hope is that President Clinton can convince Netanyahu to respect his commitments," he told journalists Saturday morning after the cabinet's overnight meeting.

He totally rejected Israel's insistence on keeping 60 per cent of the West Bank in any final settlement with the Palestinians.

## Leftist Chileans stage protest against Pinochet

SANTIAGO, Jan 18: Leftist Chileans took to the streets of Santiago on Saturday shouting insults to protest against former dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet's plans to take a seat in the senate, reports Reuters.

About 40 members of the Communist Party chanted insults in front of a cathedral in Santiago.

## 'Sonia's concern over Babri Masjid demolition is sheer opportunism'

HYDERABAD, Jan 18: United Front convenor N Chandrababu Naidu today said Sonia Gandhi's concern over demolition of Babri Masjid was a "sheer opportunism" as the then Congress government at the centre was a mere spectacle to December 6 incident at Ayodhya, reports PTI.

The Congress had failed to react to the demolition for 48 hours then and Sonia Gandhi expressing deep concern over the incident six-year later is ridiculous, Naidu told reporters here today.

Sonia Gandhi's silence all these years on the issue and now championing the cause of secularism, is nothing short of political opportunism, Naidu said adding that Congress,

which was in power during the demolition, was now raising a hue and cry against fundamentalism and its commitment towards secularism. It speaks of its dubious credentials, he said.

Terming United Front as the sole champion of secular politics, Naidu expressed hope that they would defeat the communal BJP and the corrupt Congress in the ensuing elections.

The entry of Sonia into politics would hardly affect the chances of United Front at the

hustings, Naidu claimed and asserted that the Front would get a workable majority by virtue of its performance alone.

When asked why the United Front government could not make the Bofors documents public, Naidu said it was in progress and his party was committed to expose the guilty.

## Parties urged not to put up candidates with criminal record

Meanwhile, former Lok Sabha Speaker Rabi Ray today appealed to all political parties not to put up candidates with criminal record in the ensuing parliamentary elections.

Claiming that as many as 40 members of the dissolved Lok Sabha and 700 members in different state legislatures had criminal background, Ray said there was no law to debar these members from entering into the democratic institutions.

That was why a conference of all political parties should be convened within the next one week to debate on the issue. Prime Minister I K Gujral should himself take the initiative to convene such a conference, Ray said here.

## Off the Record

## It was Di's trademark

LONDON: It was Diana's trademark, but Princess Anne says it is just not her style, reports AP.

The very idea that all children want to be cuddled by a complete stranger I find utterly amazing, especially in front of the press," Anne, 47, was quoted as saying in London's Daily Telegraph on Saturday.

Diana, 36, broke with tradition by shaking hands with AIDS patients, kissing children, and touching the stumps of land mine victims. She became the most popular and famous royal, and her death August 31 prompted an outpouring of national grief.

"It is just that different people work in different ways to get the message across," Anne said.

## Jackson breathes sign of relief

LOS ANGELES: An Italian singer lost a copyright infringement case that claimed Michael Jackson's hit song "Will You Be There" was stolen, reports AP.

The case was submitted to a three-judge panel in Rome on November 20 and official notice of their decision in favour of Jackson and Sony Music was received by Jackson lawyer Eve Wagner late last week.

Michael Jackson has once again been vindicated, and we are delighted that justice has been served," Wagner said Friday. Italian singer Al Bano, who sued in 1992, was ordered by the Rome panel to pay Jackson's and Sony's legal expenses, Wagner said.

Jackson testified in Rome on February 4 that he did not plagiarise the Italian song "I Cigni di Balaka" (The Swans of Balaka) by Bano when he composed "Will You Be There", which was on his 1991 "Dangerous" album.

"There is some similarity, but it's completely coincidental," Jackson testified.



Paula Jones and her husband Stephen Jones arrive at the office of President Clinton's personal attorney, Robert Bennett, Saturday, in Washington. Clinton and Jones were meeting as the president faced unprecedented questioning by her lawyers, under oath, about her accusation that he asked her for sex seven years ago. — AP/UNB photo

## BJP's thrust for power threatens India's secular character

NEW DELHI, Jan 18: Hindu nationalists are making their most determined bid for power in India, sparking fears that the country's secular character could be under threat, reports AFP.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) is expected to consolidate its position as the nation's largest party at the February-March elections.

Most analysts are still predicting a hung parliament, but the BJP has notched up a string of strategic pre-polls alliances with regional groups which could help it launch a coalition government.

Party ideologue Jana Krishnamurthy told AFP: "There is every possibility that we might get a majority on our own (in the 545-seat parliament)."

"With allies, we are sure to win."

The BJP's main election pledge is that it will bring stability to India as the country prepares for its fifth government within two years.

One of those governments was provided by the BJP itself, but its first taste of power ended within a fortnight after its administration failed to win a majority.

including the once-dominant Congress — in disarray, the BJP campaign is striking a sympathetic chord among voters.

The BJP is trying to appeal to overcome the long-standing stigma of being a political "untouchable" because of its allegedly sectarian views.

For the first time it is aggressively wooing Muslims — India's largest religious minority of 125 million people, who have traditionally eyed the BJP with disdain.

It has promised to field Muslim candidates and, in a bizarre twist to 1992 when it was charged with condoning the destruction of a 16th-century mosque by Hindu fanatics, the party has promised help to build two Muslim shrines in southern India.

The old charge against the BJP that it is non-secular no longer holds good," the BJP's moderate premier-in-waiting Atal Behari Vajpayee said in an interview.

BJP president Lal Krishna Advani, a hardliner compared to Vajpayee, added: "Today we are seen as the mainstream party, which can offer the right solutions to the innumerable problems confronting the nation."

The BJP, one of India's best organised parties with a membership running into millions finished as the largest single party in the 1996 elections, winning 162 of 545 seats and 20.29 per cent of the vote.

For a party which won just two seats in the 1984 elections, with its influence limited to select regions, the BJP has come a long way.

The party's electoral success in recent years has paralleled the steadily declining appeal of the Congress.

But with religious passions on the decline, the party is harping on issues such as political stability and "genuine" secularism.

Not everyone, however, is impressed. The BJP will introduce a fundamentalist constitution if it captures power in Delhi said Doraiswamy Rajia a Communist leader. "People should be sceptical about its new found secular face."

Even BJP admirers admit the party's new tactics of embracing a wide collection of politicians defecting from other parties has eroded its long held image of ideological discipline.

BJP strategists, however, believe it is a small price to pay if it leads to rule over the world's largest democracy.