

Netanyahu asks Jews to unite 'Another treaty possible with Palestinians by 2000'

NEW YORK, May 17: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a synagogue congregation Saturday that another peace treaty with the Palestinians was possible by 2000 and urged Jews to stand united, reports AP.

"It is within our power by the close of the millennium to have at least one more treaty (with the Palestinians), possibly more," he told about 1,000 people at the conservative Park Avenue Synagogue.

"Assuming there is Palestinian compliance, I believe we can find the right format to disengage from the land that is less critical to our defenses and keep the ones that are vital to our security," he said.

His comments during a visit to New York came a day after he repeated Israel's offer to withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon as the United Nations demanded 20 years ago.

He also stressed the importance of Jewish unity.

"We need to have all three extremes of Judaism sitting together to begin to resolve the most strident differences among us," he said. "I have to tell you the negotiations with Arafat are easier."

On Sunday, he was scheduled to attend a salute to Israel parade in Manhattan before

Pakistan N-test It's a matter of when, not if, says Pak foreign minister

ISLAMABAD, May 17: Pakistan will test a nuclear device in response to India's testing — it's just a question of when, Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub said Sunday.

"It's a matter of when, not if, Pakistan will test... the decision has already been taken by Cabinet," Ayub told The Associated Press in a telephone interview from his rural home in northwestern Pakistan.

"It will now be a political decision of when to test," he said. "I cannot disclose when to you... it's not going to be in a public stadium where we will have a big bang for all to see."

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has been under mounting pressure from across the political spectrum at home to test a nuclear device in response to India's testing on Monday and again Wednesday of five nuclear devices.

The international community has been urging restraint. The United States sent a senior delegation to Pakistan on Friday to woo Pakistan away from testing. They left early Saturday for the summit of industrialised leaders in Britain, saying that they had received assurances from Pakistan's leadership that no "final or ir-

revocable" decision on testing had been made.

Ayub told The AP that was no longer true. The Cabinet, he said, has made a decision — a test of a nuclear device will be made.

There are intelligence reports that Pakistan is preparing a testing site at Chagai in southwestern Baluchistan province, barely 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the border with Iran.

According to Pakistan's largest Urdu-language newspaper, The Jang, Sunday Pakistan has finished its preparations for a nuclear test and "can test within three hours." The newspaper, which did not identify its sources, said there was a considerable amount of air activity over the site and that the military already had selected three possible sites in the area for a test.

It claimed that there were military helicopters in the area of Rosko in the Chagai district of southwestern Baluchistan province — a sparsely populated desert region.

The newspaper said residents have been told to stay clear of the area.

"The nuclear floodgates have been thrown wide open," said

Mayor of Jaffna assassinated

COLOMBO, May 17: Gunmen on Sunday shot dead the mayor of Sri Lanka's northern city of Jaffna, the government's stronghold in a region virtually cut off from the rest of Sri Lanka by separatist fighters, reports AP.

Sarajini Yogeswaran's death was reported by an official of her party, the Tamil United Liberation Front.

She was shot by unidentified gunmen who later escaped at her house at 10:30 AM (0430 GMT), said party secretary Ananda Sagari said in Colombo.

"About nine or ten shots had been fired by them," Sagari said. "From what we know, there were two gunmen."

Another municipal council member, identified only as Paramasivam, was also killed, Sagari said.

Mrs Yogeswaran was elected mayor of the Jaffna municipal council in January in elections opposed by the main group fighting for an independent homeland in the Tamil-dominated north and east, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The elections, the first in the Jaffna region since 1983, established 16 local councils that will be given more autonomy under a plan the government hopes will end a 15-year-old ethnic war.

More than a dozen clashes between supporters of rival parties were reported in run up to the elections, but voting day was relatively peaceful.

Obscure Sikh newsletter 'outspies' the CIA!

WASHINGTON, May 17: An obscure Sikh separatist publication in Canada predicted the stunning event even as the U.S. intelligence community went into a tizzy over its failure to spot preparations for India's nuclear tests.

The U.S. administration has tried to downplay the scoop pulled off by Charhdi Kala International, published from Surrey, British Columbia, four days before the first phase of tests, reports IANS.

In its May 7 issue, the weekly newsletter with a circulation of 9,500, had reported: "Preparations for an Indian nuclear test have been further confirmed by our sources in India (who have never been wrong having millions of pairs of eyes and ears fixed to the ground) who report all kinds of feverish night time activities in the vicinity of Pokharan in Rajasthan state 60 miles from the Pakistan border."

"The question is will the United States allow the fascists in Delhi to circumvent the U.S. non-proliferation laws? Only time will tell," the weekly was quoted as saying by the New York Times yesterday.

In its story, titled "Scooped, on Tests, U.S. Scores a Sikh Journal", the newspaper reported that Riaz Khokhar, Pakistani Ambassador to the U.S., called on Karl Inderfuth, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian affairs with a copy of the Sikh publication.

Khokhar is reported to have told Inderfuth that if a "small newsletter's sources had got it right", how could the U.S. "with all its spy satellites and human intelligence operatives" failed to detect preparations.

But the State Department has called the Sikh newsletter "irresponsible". A department official said, "We find it basically to be a rag full of inaccuracies, quite tendentious. It has a very big axe to grind," adding that this time, "it (the publication) got lucky."

An intelligence official told the New York Times: "There are literally thousands of publications... that come to the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and other intelligence agencies. I don't know at this time whether anyone from the intelligence community gets or takes this newsletter seriously."

Another official said that Khokhar had referred to the newsletter report, but only "to poke fun at the inability of the US intelligence community."

However, Pakistani Embassy officials said it was "no joking matter."

BRIEFLY

Hashimoto to visit US in July: Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto has accepted an invitation by President Bill Clinton to visit the United States in July, says USIS from Birmingham.

The two leaders met on the sidelines of the G-8 Summit in Birmingham.

2 Hutus shot dead in Nairobi: Two Rwandan Hutus working for the United Nations in Nairobi were shot dead Saturday by unidentified gunmen, police and press sources said, AFP reports from Nairobi.

They said Seth Sedashonga and Bosco Akulyububu were killed in Nairobi's Westlands suburb as they were driving from the direction of the UN headquarters in Girigiri towards the city centre.

N-material stolen in S Africa: A container of radioactive material was stolen from the Johannesburg International Airport, South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) television news reported Saturday, AFP says from Johannesburg.

The container, which held a radioactive isotope, went missing from the cargo section of the airport last week, it reported. The extremely hazardous isotope was en route to Brazil and was manufactured at a nuclear plant near Pretoria.

2 smugglers killed in Tajikistan: Russian border guards in Tajikistan shot dead two people trying to smuggle a large quantity of drugs into the war-ravaged central Asian state from Afghanistan, a guards' spokesman said Saturday, Reuters reports from Dushanbe.

The officer said the guards opened fire on the two armed men on Friday as they crossed the borderline Pyandzh River in an inflatable dinghy. He said the intruders had tried to smuggle into Tajikistan 36 kg of "chars", a narcotic derived from opium.

Miners' strike on in Siberia: Striking coal miners in central Siberia refused to allow any trains along a stretch of the Trans-Siberian railway for a third day Sunday, demanding 20 million rubles (3.3 million dollars) in back wages, AP reports from Moscow.

The striking miners have the support of other workers in the city of Anzhero-Sudzhensk, whose working conditions are not much better, the ITAR-Tass news agency said.



Demonstrators form a human chain surrounding the site of the G8 Summit, near St Philips Cathedral in Birmingham Saturday in protest over what they believe are unacceptable levels of third world debt — AP/UNB photo

Political turmoil in Indonesia: Army the arbitrator?

JAKARTA, May 17: Indonesia's army has again emerged as a key player in its country's history, that of referee amid growing and violent calls for the president to step aside, analysts say, reports AFP.

It was the armed forces that, in 1965-66, helped overthrow Sukarno, president and father of the 1945 independence from the Dutch.

Soldiers, faced with violence in the streets by students and intellectuals, elevated their general of strategic forces, Suharto, who has since ruled the country with an iron fist.

The security forces, including police, number some 500,000 for a population of 202 million, and the army, known by its acronym ABRI, is a powerful and respected institution in the fragile country.

They fought the struggle for independence and legitimised the political and social order, holding the country together in times of crisis.

Calls for Suharto's resignation have grown in volume, spreading through the populace and echoing off the walls of a presidential palace surrounded by armour.

But, Suharto, 76, holds that he is president by the will of the people, and as such can call on considerable power.

He can declare a state of emergency, even martial law, without consultation and for as long as he sees fit, under legislation adopted in March by the National Assembly, a body largely nominated by himself.

Suharto called in the army, which stood by amid looting but managed to restore a semblance of calm to the capital as the expatriate populace fled.

"It seems likely that, sooner or later, the army will have to reveal its political colours," the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies said in a report last month.

Since Suharto's return from an official visit to Egypt on Thursday, the time is coming, if it has not already arrived, for the army to take sides.

Military analysts say the choice is to remain loyal to the president, or to uphold the responsibility of the ABRI, which is to serve Indonesia and its people.

Given that 15 veteran generals of the independence movement signed a letter to Suharto,

published in Saturday's press, calling for fresh elections, the choice for the military appears simple and a done deal.

It was the strongest and clearest call so far, without precedent in Indonesia and deemed to represent the wishes of the military command.

The minister for defence and head of the armed forces, General Wiranto, said Thursday that ABRI supported the constitutional system.

The high command is no longer split between factions like it was in the past, said a western defence attaché.

"Now, you have different personalities, with different interests... What they do have in common is that they have been hand picked by the president," the analyst said.

Military analysts say support for Suharto has reached its limits — either he accepts that the economy will continue to worsen, or face huge demonstrations by a populace pushed too far.

"Maybe the general will respectfully ask the president to step back, like Sukarno," said a western diplomat. "If not, God save Indonesia."

G8 leaders call for implementation of HIPC initiatives

LONDON, May 17: Group of Eight (G-8) leaders yesterday called for the speedy implementation of a plan to reduce the debt of the world's poorest countries, reports AFP.

But they did not come up with any concrete measures to accelerate debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.

And rather than issuing a joint communiqué as they have on other issues, summit host Britain issued a statement on behalf of the G-8 in response to a day of protest here calling for urgent action.

The statement issued by G-8 Prime Minister Tony Blair said leaders encouraged all countries for HIPC to take the policy measures needed to embark on the process as soon as possible so that they can be in the process by 2000.

Blair said the G-8 would work with others to "ensure that all eligible countries get the relief they need to secure a lasting exit from their debt problems."

Blair was referring to a mechanism adopted in 1996 at the Lyon Summit in France which put into place a system for the reduction of debt owed to international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

So far six countries have been declared eligible — Uganda, Bolivia, Burkino Faso, Guyana, Ivory Coast and Mozambique — for debt relief of about 7 billion dollars.

Off the Record

Yet another attempt to modernise the monarchy

LONDON: Queen Elizabeth II will allow live televised coverage of official ceremonies within her royal palaces as part of attempts to modernise the monarchy. The Sunday Times reported, says AP.

The newspaper said that a camera crew will accompany the Queen at her garden parties, held in the grounds of Buckingham Palace over the summer months, and record conversations with members of the public invited to them.

From mid-July, investiture ceremonies, in which the Queen gives approximately 2,000 honours per year to worthy Britons and members of Britain's former empire, will be televised. A camera crew will also be allowed to film the state banquet in honour of Emperor Akihito of Japan, whose visit begins later this month.

Buckingham Palace said that footage of the Queen's official palace engagements would be sold to television companies for a nominal fee.

A diamond in the sky?

LONDON: The story of the diamond as big as The Ritz is well known, but now US astronomers think they have discovered a sparkler the size of a planet. The Sunday Times reported, says AFP.

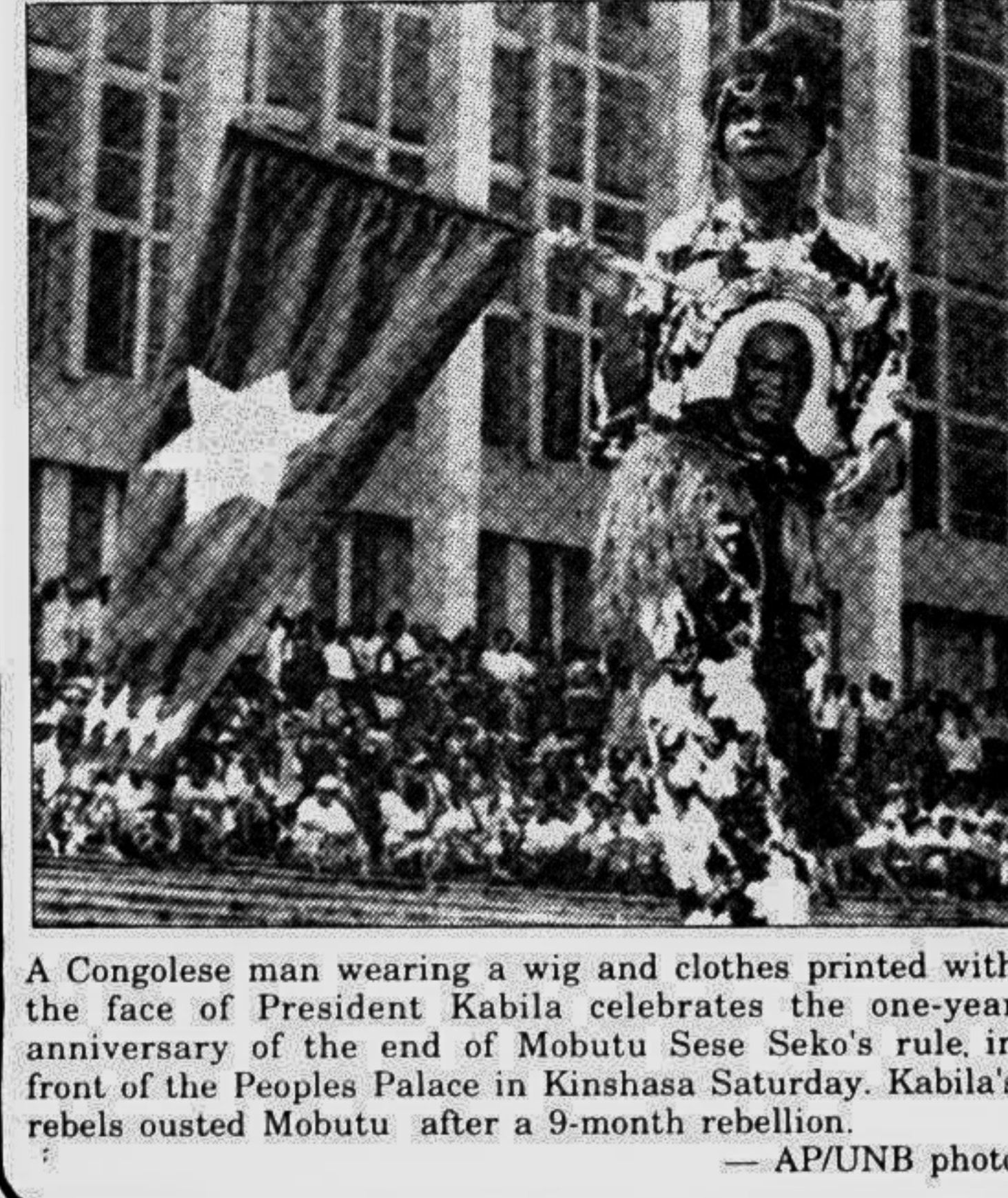
A star prosaically identified as BPM 37093, located 17 light years from earth in the constellation of Centaurus, has a diameter of 12,800 kilometres and a massive density — a teaspoon of its substance would weigh a tonne, the paper said.

"We think that BPM 37093 is primarily made up of carbon and oxygen in a crystallised state," astronomer Steve Kawaler was quoted as saying.

"That would make it a diamond with a blue-green tint. This truly could be a diamond in the sky."

Scientists also think the new star, with a surface temperature of 12,000 degrees Celsius and estimated to be between 11 billion and 12 billion years old, will help them determine the age of the Milky Way.

"This finding will extend the lower limit of the age of the Milky Way and, in turn, extend the estimated age of the universe," Kawaler said.



A Congolese man wearing a wig and clothes printed with the face of President Kabila celebrates the one-year anniversary of the end of Mobutu Sese Seko's rule, in front of the Peoples Palace in Kinshasa Saturday. Kabila's rebels ousted Mobutu after a 9-month rebellion. — AP/UNB photo

BJP under pressure to deliver on other election pledges

NEW DELHI, May 17: With the nuclear test explosions also having blown away its coalition blues, India's main ruling party was under pressure to show that it could deliver on the other big promises it had made to voters, reports IANS.

As it celebrated 'shourya divas', Hindi for valour day, across the country yesterday, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was being advised by political opponents and media commentators to turn its attention to the pressing needs of the over 900 million Indians.

While the demonstration of its nuclear prowess has added weight to New Delhi's voice in the world, this would not carry conviction unless backed by a sound economy and a healthy, educated population with adequate livelihood opportunities, it was pointed out.

The main opposition Congress party spoke of the need for development "explosions" which would end hunger, illiteracy and joblessness in the country. "What about an explo-

sion on the food front, the housing front?" wondered former junior External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid on a television talk show on the nuclear tests.

Political analysts said that Vajpayee now has his first real chance to get down to the business of administration with the nuclear tests temporarily allaying the political problems troubling his 17-party alliance since the day it took office on March 19. A not unexpected spin-off from the nuclear explosions has been an assertion of Vajpayee's authority over hitherto squabbling allies who had held governance hostage to their personal agendas.

The Prime Minister said that the nuclear tests were carried out to implement the promise made by the ruling alliance in its National Agenda of Governance to exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons.

Although the party denied opposition charges that the nuclear tests were timed for domestic political gain, the BJP was basking in the adulation

claim credit for an action which was made possible by the decision of the successive Congress and UF governments to keep India's nuclear weapons programme going.

Mulayam Singh Yadav, Defence Minister in the former UF government, claimed that the UF had decided to hold the nuclear tests in October 1997, but these were called off because of sudden political developments which led to the fall of the UF government. "A large amount of money was pumped in during my tenure to facilitate the successful completion of this project," Yadav told The Times of India newspaper.

Former Prime Minister I.K. Gujral said that while the decision to go nuclear ought to be kept secret, the BJP-led government must not project this as a "partisan act." In an interview to the Times, Gujral also warned against the dangers of "political jingoism" which the "euphoria" generated by the tests could lead to.

"This will create a psychosis which is dangerous for the

Cancer drug Limited test on humans may begin end of year

CHICAGO, May 17: The researcher who discovered two drugs that have eliminated cancer tumors in mice said he has received federal permission to treat about 30 terminally ill patients who have not responded to other drugs, reports AP.

The first, very limited tests of the drugs on humans could come by the end of the year or early next year. Dr Judah Folkman told the Chicago Tribune in a story for Sunday editions.

The drugs, angiostatin and endostatin, are highly experimental and have been tried only in mice, where they have caused cancerous tumors to permanently disappear.

Folkman told the Tribune in an interview Friday that angiostatin and endostatin are being produced by a National Cancer Institute facility, not in mass quantities, "but just enough for a small number of patients."

"So far, they're right on schedule for December or the first of the year. That's our hope," he said.

Whole country behind PM on N-test issue: Pawar

BELGIUM, May 17: Senior Congress leader and leader of opposition in Lok Sabha Sahrad Pawar, today said the whole country stands with the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on the issue of nuclear tests. And the nation has to face the challenge of international sanctions unitedly, reports PTI.

Talking to reporters at Nipani, about 60 kms from here, Pawar said the nuclear tests have shown that the country has the capabilities to produce nuclear bombs.

To a question, he said "the prime minister must have some valid reasons to have taken up the task (the nuclear tests) at this juncture."

Pawar said the country is facing a financial crisis today and there is a need to improve the investment climate and make conscious efforts in that direction.

The Congress leader condemned international outcry against India in the wake of the tests.

AFP adds from New Delhi: India announced for the first time today that it has completed work on a medium-range ballistic missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead.

APJ Abdul Kalam, head of



Supporters of India's decision to test nuclear devices earlier this week light firecrackers in celebration of the tests Saturday in New Delhi. — AP/UNB photo