

Myanmar Junta threatens action against Suu Kyi

YANGON, June 29: Myanmar's military Junta threatened today to take legal action against opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her political party, saying she was on a collision course with the government, reports Reuters.

The warnings were carried in commentaries run by three state-owned newspapers which said: "The Myanmar government and its people can no longer tolerate the actions of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi who ignores the interest of the nation and people."

Similar warnings appeared in the media in the days prior to Suu Kyi's house arrest in 1989 for nearly six years by the then ruling military government. The Nobel Peace prize winner was released from detention in mid-1995.

The country's media are considered mouthpieces of the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

The latest threat follows demands by Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) party that the Junta convene parliament by August 2 in accordance with the results of the 1990 election. The NLD swept the election, but its victory was never recognised by the military.

Clinton appeals to Beijing Grant more freedom to people

BEIJING, June 29: US President Bill Clinton, addressing the university that gave birth to China's 1989 pro-democracy movement, appealed to Beijing today to grant greater freedom to the Chinese people, arguing that "freedom strengthens stability," reports Reuters.

But in a lively question-and-answer period with students Clinton was asked to defend human rights practices in the United States, and he admitted that his own country remains burdened by racial discrimination, crime and other afflictions.

"We are still not perfect," he said.

Clinton's speech at Peking University, hot bed of the dissent that was crushed by Chinese authorities on June 4, 1989 at Tiananmen Square, was broadcast live on state television.

It was a second remarkable concession by communist authorities, who had allowed millions of Chinese to watch live a post-summit news conference on Saturday where Clinton and Chinese President Jiang Zemin exchanged frank views on a range of subjects from human rights to Tibet.

Applause erupted in the

packed hall inside the University library building when Clinton denied — in response to a question whether he was hiding anything behind his smile — that he had ulterior motives in seeking a friendlier relationship between the United States and China.

"I want a partnership, I'm not hiding another design behind a smile, that's what I really believe," he said.

Praising China as an ancient culture whose "greatest days are still ahead," Clinton called for a fuller partnership between the United States and China to tackle problems such as the budding nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan and the Asian economic crisis.

He said he had felt the "steady breeze of freedom" emerging in China during his nine-day visit but nonetheless believed deeper changes were needed to ensure individual liberties for China's 1.2 billion people.

"We believe, and our experience demonstrates, that freedom strengthens stability, and helps nations to change," he said.

Jiang had said in the leaders' televised exchanges on Satur-

day that the Tiananmen Square crackdown was necessary to preserve China's stability.

Clinton insisted the United States was not trying to impose its ideals on China.

"But we are convinced that certain rights are universal, not American rights or European rights or rights for developed nations... the right to be treated with dignity, the right to express one's opinion, to choose one's own leaders, to associate freely with others, and to worship or not, freely, however, one chooses," he said.

Several students were critical and expressed suspicion of the United States.

AP adds: Reaching out to the generation that will lead China in the new millennium, US President Bill Clinton said in a speech broadcast across China Monday that human rights are the birthrights of people everywhere.

Clinton urged China's communist leaders not to fear an open society. "Freedom is a powerful engine of progress," he said in a speech at Peking University.

Students and faculty members warmly welcomed the American leader as he strode

into a hall on the quiet, leafy campus.

"Everything we know about the way the world is changing and the challenges your generation will face tell us that our two nations will be better off working together than apart," Clinton told the students.

A banner at the back of the hall declared: "The US and China: An Enduring Friendship."

Standing in a drab auditorium before hundreds of students and teachers, Clinton said some people in both America and China question whether closer relations are worthwhile. "But everything we know about the way the world is changing and the challenges your generation will face tell us that our two nations will be better off working together than apart," Clinton said.

The president departed from his text at one point to stress concern about the environment, telling university faculty and student they would have to help "lead the way" in saving the world from greenhouse gases that are destroying the ozone layer.

He praised China for having a positive economic role in the region.



UN Secretary General's special envoy Alvaro de Soto, left, shakes hands with Pakistani Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan in Islamabad Sunday. Alvaro de Soto visited Islamabad to meet with Pakistani officials to resolve the dispute between Pakistan and India to maintain peace and stability in South Asia. — AP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

23 killed in Chinese floods: Rainy season landslides and hailstorms have killed at least 23 people across China, even as flood-swollen rivers receded in a city US President Bill Clinton will visit, state media reported yesterday. AP says from Beijing.

In Guilin, a south China scenic spot that Clinton will tour Thursday, city residents mopped up after weeks of flooding, China Daily reported. The rains stranded 800,000 people, left more than 200,000 homeless and killed "dozens of people" in the Guilin area over the past few weeks, the report said.

Floods, storms kill 15 in US: Mobile homes became houseboats in West Virginia, a tornado was spawned in Ohio and lightning storms rattled Wisconsin amid heavy rains that deluged several states and caused 15 deaths on the weekend. AP reports from New York.

Flash flooding caused by heavy rains and storms with high winds forced hundreds of people from their homes, closed roads and cut power to more than 58,000 people across West Virginia on Sunday, prompting Gov. Cecil Underwood to declare a state of emergency in 17 counties. Lightning strikes, raging waterways and fallen power lines wreaked havoc in several states.

4 Cambodians held for murder: Four Cambodian men have been arrested and accused of the kidnap and murder of an Iraqi citizen whose bound and bloated body was discovered a week ago on a rural highway, police said yesterday. AP reports from Phnom Penh.

The victim, Fahad D. Mohamad, 36, was accused by his assailants of running a visa scam and making off with 68,000 dollars collected from 17 Cambodian students who were seeking to continue their studies in the United States.

Quakes hit N Iran: Two moderate earthquakes hit a northern Iranian province Monday morning, the scene of a deadly quake eight years ago that killed 40,000 people, but no victims or damage has been reported, AFP says from Tehran.

The quakes, measuring 4.2 and 3.6 degrees on the open-ended Richter scale, hit the city of Roudbar in Gilan province shortly after 8 am, the Geophysics Institute said.

60 drown in Sierra Leone: Some 60 supporters of Sierra Leone's ousted Junta, including rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), drowned at the weekend in the east of the country, aid agency sources said, AFP reports from Freetown.

The accident took place Saturday when canoes crossing the Moa river in the Kailahun district struck rocks and capsized.

Bombs explode in Corsica: Two bombings overnight targeted a housing office and a military police camp, injuring an officer, police said yesterday, in the latest attacks on this French Mediterranean island, AP says from Ajaccio, Corsica.

The gendarme was hospitalised in shock after a package bomb was thrown at the camp near the town of Borgo, outside the northern port of Bastia late Sunday night, authorities said on customary anonymity.

Princess Anne visits Canada: Britain's Princess Anne on Sunday ended a four-day visit to the maritime province of New Brunswick after attending an open air mass near the Acadian town of Shediac, AFP reports from Canada.

Anne, the only daughter of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, arrived Thursday for ceremonies marking the 150th anniversary of the 8th Canadian Hussars. Anne, the regiment's honorary commander-in-chief, presented the regiment with a new flag to replace its tattered old flag.

107 Africans held in Italy: Italian coastguards said they had arrested 107 illegal immigrants from Africa Sunday after they landed on the island of Pantelleria between Sicily and Tunisia, AFP reports from Pantelleria, Italy.

Originating from Tunisia, Morocco and Sierra Leone, they arrived Saturday aboard two boats from Tunisia. A 33-year-old Tunisian was being held on suspicion of organising the trip, while the rest would be served with expulsion orders.

Indian MP alleges Libya quietly seeks N-technology from Delhi

MADRAS, India, June 29: Libya has quietly sought nuclear technology from India, a member of the Indian parliament alleged here on Sunday, reports AFP.

Subramaniam Swamy told reporters in this southern city that Libya made the request to an Indian cabinet minister through a London based businessman some two weeks ago.

Swamy, a bitter critic of India's Hindu nationalist-led government quoted "reliable information" to say Tripoli had offered a large amount of money to New Delhi in exchange for the nuclear technology.

"The offer, if accepted will create a grave danger to global security," Swamy said.

Swamy gave no further details about the alleged Libyan move.

An Indian newspaper however, said last week that Libya had also sought nuclear technology after New Delhi exploded a nuclear device in 1974, India, the report said, rejected that request.

India, Pakistan sparking new arms race: Clinton

BEIJING, June 29: US President Bill Clinton said today that India and Pakistan were defying a world movement against nuclear danger and risking an arms race in South Asia, reports Reuters.

"On the Indian subcontinent, just as most of the rest of the world is moving away from nuclear danger, India and Pakistan risk sparking a new arms race," he said at Peking University.

In the keynote speech of his landmark state visit to China, Clinton hailed the fact that China and the United States — two of the five internationally-recognised nuclear powers — "are now pursuing a common strategy to move India and Pakistan away from further (nuclear) testing and toward and dialogue to resolve their differences."

A joint statement issued after Clinton's summit with Chinese President Jiang Zemin on Saturday also attempted to prod India and Pakistan into taking steps to halt a nuclear arms race triggered when they conducted tests last month. They condemned the nuclear tests and reiterated their insistence that the blasts would not win India and Pakistan member-

ship in the world nuclear club.

They called on India and Pakistan to join the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and to refrain from building nuclear weapons or the missiles to deliver them.

But in a statement released by its embassy in Beijing on Sunday, India rejected any attempt by Beijing and Washington to interfere in the issue.

The idea of Washington and New Delhi asserting responsibility for peace and stability in South Asia "reflects the hegemonic mentality of a bygone era in international relations and is completely unacceptable and out of place in the present day world," it said.

Secretary of State Madeline Albright, accompanying Clinton on his China tour, on Sunday brushed off India's statement.

"They had better stop dismissing statements like this because they are dismissing what is a very evident signal from the rest of the world that what they are doing has not gained them stature and clearly has not gained them security either," she said.



French President Jacques Chirac, right, and Mozambique counterpart Joaquim Chissano hold bouquets while posing with young Mozambique girls, upon his arrival at Maputo airport Sunday. His four-nation, six-day tour marks a departure in Paris' policy toward Africa. — AP/UNB photo

Seven bodies discovered in Karachi

KARACHI, June 29: Police discovered seven bodies in different parts of this troubled city on Monday. Some of them bore the marks of torture, all of them were riddled with bullet holes, police said, reports AP.

Only one body has been identified, but police officials say that the condition of the other bodies indicate that their deaths were likely linked to the ongoing feud between rival factions of the militant ethnic group, the Mohajir Qami Movement.

Since June 1 more than 150 people have been killed in Karachi — many of them civilians caught in the crossfire — others targeted, tortured and killed.

Late on Sunday a gun battle that continued most of the night in the violent Korangi neighbourhood of Karachi left three people dead, bringing the death toll in the last 24 hours to 10.

France to back S African seat on UNSC

JOHANNESBURG, June 29: French President Jacques Chirac will back a South African seat on an expanded UN Security Council, he said in an interview with SABC public television Sunday, reports AFP.

Chirac, in Southern Africa on a six-day, four-nation tour, said South Africa had "the natural potential to be a permanent member of the Security Council, which today does not represent the world."

"France supports a South African seat," he said.

France is one of five permanent members on the Security Council who wield veto power, along with Britain, China, Russia and the United States.

The council has a total of 15 members, including 10 non-permanent members which are elected to two year terms on a regional rotation basis.

Troops open fire on protesters in E Timor, 1 dies

DILI, East Timor, June 29: Indonesian troops opened fire on protesters demanding independence for East Timor today and at least one person was killed, witnesses and church sources said.

Aides to Bishop Basilio dos Nascimento told Reuters the troops opened fire on a crowd of protesters outside the main Cathedral in the town of Baucau, the second-largest in East Timor, just after three European ambassadors arrived there to meet the bishop.

The ambassadors from Britain, Austria and the Netherlands are on a trip to East Timor to review political developments in the troubled former Portuguese territory.

One person was killed and five others were injured, the aides and witnesses told Reuters. The troops also fired tear gas shells to disperse the crowd, they said.

UN envoy to Angola dies in air crash

ABIDJAN, June 29: The UN envoy to Angola, Alioune Blondin Beye, died in the Friday crash of an aircraft he was travelling in, the Ivorian government confirmed in a televised statement Sunday, reports AFP.

The Ivorian government "regrets to announce the death of Blondin Beye," a state television evening news broadcast said around 8:45 pm (2045 GMT).

Ivorian president Henri Konan Bete has sent his condolences to UN secretary general Kofi Annan, Malian resident Alpha Omar Konare and to Beye's family, the broadcast added.

Clinton urged to meet ousted Chinese leader

BEIJING, June 29: A group of 125 Chinese dissidents are urging visiting US President Bill Clinton to meet with former Communist Party leader Zhao Ziyang, who was ousted during the 1989 student-led protests in Tiananmen Square, reports AP.

"We strongly urge President Clinton to take just one hour of his time in Beijing to meet with Zhao Ziyang," the group said in a statement faxed to news agencies in Beijing early Monday by the New York-based group Human Rights in China.

Chinese activists have repeatedly urged Clinton to meet with a dissident during his visit to China to underscore his criticism of Beijing's human rights records.

In public remarks since his arrival, Clinton has emphasised his desire to see the Chinese government allow more freedoms. He sparred with Chinese President Jiang Zemin on the topic during a post-summit news conference. However, his official schedule has included no such meetings.

Clinton was due to leave Beijing later Tuesday for Shanghai. The open letter urged Clinton

to pressure Chinese leaders to free Zhao, who has not appeared in public since he spoke to student protesters in Tiananmen Square on May 19, 1989, saying tearfully, "I came to late."

Hours later party elders purged him for refusing to back a military crackdown, and declared a state of martial law. On June 3-4, Chinese troops shot their way into Beijing and forced protesters from the square, killing hundreds, if not thousands.

Last week, Zhao reportedly sent a letter to party leaders urging them to use the occasion of Clinton's visit to reconsider their condemnation of the protests as "counter-revolutionary turmoil."

Clinton's arrival in China, in the northern city of Xi'an, was marred by the detentions of four activists, who were later released following US protests. Yang Hai, one of those detained in Xi'an, signed the appeal.

The letter was signed by a number of veteran activists, who claimed to have obtained the endorsement of 125 dissidents from across the country.

'AIDS epidemic out of control in many states'

GENEVA, June 29: The AIDS epidemic is out of control in many countries, despite great advances over the past year, the head of the UN AIDS programme, UNAIDS said Sunday, reports AFP.

"And unlike a decade ago," Peter Piot told the opening session of the 12th World AIDS Conference, "this epidemic is out of control at the very time when we know what to do."

Referring to the conference theme of "bridging the gap" between AIDS treatment in rich and poor countries, Piot added: "The biggest AIDS gap of all is the gap between what we know we can do today and what we are actually doing."

Piot noted that in the last years AIDS had killed as many people as malaria.

In the past three years 27 countries had seen their cases of infection with the HIV virus that causes AIDS double. "In Asia a doubling of infections has occurred in almost every country," he said.

"In several countries of eastern Europe the increase has been six-fold and more. In Botswana and Zimbabwe one

out of four adults are infected, in South Africa three million people are living with HIV, in India some four million," he added.

Piot spoke of new tools, new research, new treatments, new hope and new partnerships to fight AIDS.

Lankan tailor sues tobacco company for \$38.5m

COLOMBO, June 29: A Sri Lankan tailor dying of lung cancer is suing a British and US-owned tobacco company, a newspaper reported Monday, reports AP.

It is the first time a tobacco company is being sued by a smoker in the India Ocean island, where health authorities estimate more than half of all adult men smoke.

Kurukulsuriyage Cecil Perera, 46, filed the lawsuit for 2.5 million rupees (dhs 38.5 million) on Friday against the Ceylon Tobacco Co, claiming it was responsible for his addiction to nicotine, the Island newspaper reported.

Vajpayee's future bleak as allies rock the boat

NEW DELHI, June 29: With no let-up in the war of nerves between the lead party in India's ruling alliance and its key coalition partner, speculation is growing on the longevity of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's government, reports IANS.

The main opposition Congress party added to the uncertainty when its chief Sonia Gandhi declared that her party would try its hand at government formation if the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led coalition government collapsed on its own.

"We had offered constructive support to the BJP government and our stand remains the same. If the government falls due to its own contradictions, we will not shrink from responsibility to form the government," Gandhi was quoted as saying in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

The cracks in the 17-party ruling coalition led by the BJP were exposed again at a meeting of the coordination panel of the alliance here. Four of its leading members were missing. The meeting took stock of 100 days of the Vajpayee government, steps to contain the economic and diplomatic fallout of the nuclear tests and the functioning of the coalition.

Besides former Tamil Nadu

Chief Minister Jayaram Jayalalitha of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), who absented herself because of "ill-health," two smaller AIADMK allies from the southern state missed the meet. Mamata Banerjee of the Trinamool Congress of West Bengal state missed her flight to the capital, senior BJP leader and coordination panel spokesman Jaswant Singh told reporters.

However, political observers said the real reason for the absence of the AIADMK supremo was political and she was sulking at the BJP-led government's reluctance to concede her main demand of dismissing the government in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. They noted that Vajpayee's alliance was caught in a bind, trying to placate Jayalalitha while resisting her strongarm tactics.

This was evident in the ambiguously worded response at the coordination panel meet to Jayalalitha's demand for dismissal of her arch-foe Muthuvel Karunanidhi's Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) government in Tamil Nadu.

In response to the AIADMK's demand for use of the controversial Article 356 of the Constitution to sack the Karunanidhi government, the ruling alliance said the special

federal power could only be used within constitutional constraints and was bound by a ruling of the Supreme Court.

"However it is not the suggestion of the government that this article is redundant or that it is not to be used at any time or in any circumstance," Singh added.

Analysts said this was an attempt by the Vajpayee government to tell its vital ally that while it did not want to be seen as misusing office for political gain, the AIADMK should not consider all doors shut to its demand.

Jayalalitha's party and its allies have contributed a crucial 27 lawmakers to the Vajpayee government, which has a wafer thin majority in the hung Parliament.

Observers said the mercurial AIADMK chief who was a former close Congress party ally, could pull out of the government if it failed to extract its pound of flesh. Jayalalitha gave anxious moments to the Vajpayee regime even before it took office on March 19, by withholding her support till the last minute.

Two AIADMK ministers have already quit. Jayalalitha has arm-twisted the government into sacking former Communications Minister Buta Singh to get even for the removal of

AIADMK minister S.R. Muthaliah after his implication in a corruption case.

However, the ruling alliance said there was no threat of Jayalalitha pulling the rug. P. Ramadoss, chief of AIADMK ally Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), told the alliance that there is "no question of his party's withdrawal from the government," Singh said.

Another AIADMK ally, the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), is known to be at odds with Jayalalitha's demand. MDMK chief Vaiko Gopalasamy attended the coordination panel meeting, unlike the PMK chief who stayed back in Tamil Nadu and Tamil Rajiv Congress (TRC) chief V.K. Ramamurthy, who, despite being in the capital, stayed away.

"An influential section of the BJP leadership has already veered round to the view that a refusal to succumb to Jayalalitha's pressure tactics may yield better dividends than obliging her to earn a short reprieve," said The Economic Times newspaper.

According to Tamil Nadu politicians close to Jayalalitha, the AIADMK is unlikely to pull out so soon. "Having tasted the first fruits of power and with, possibly, a lot more in the offing, she is not going to be rushed

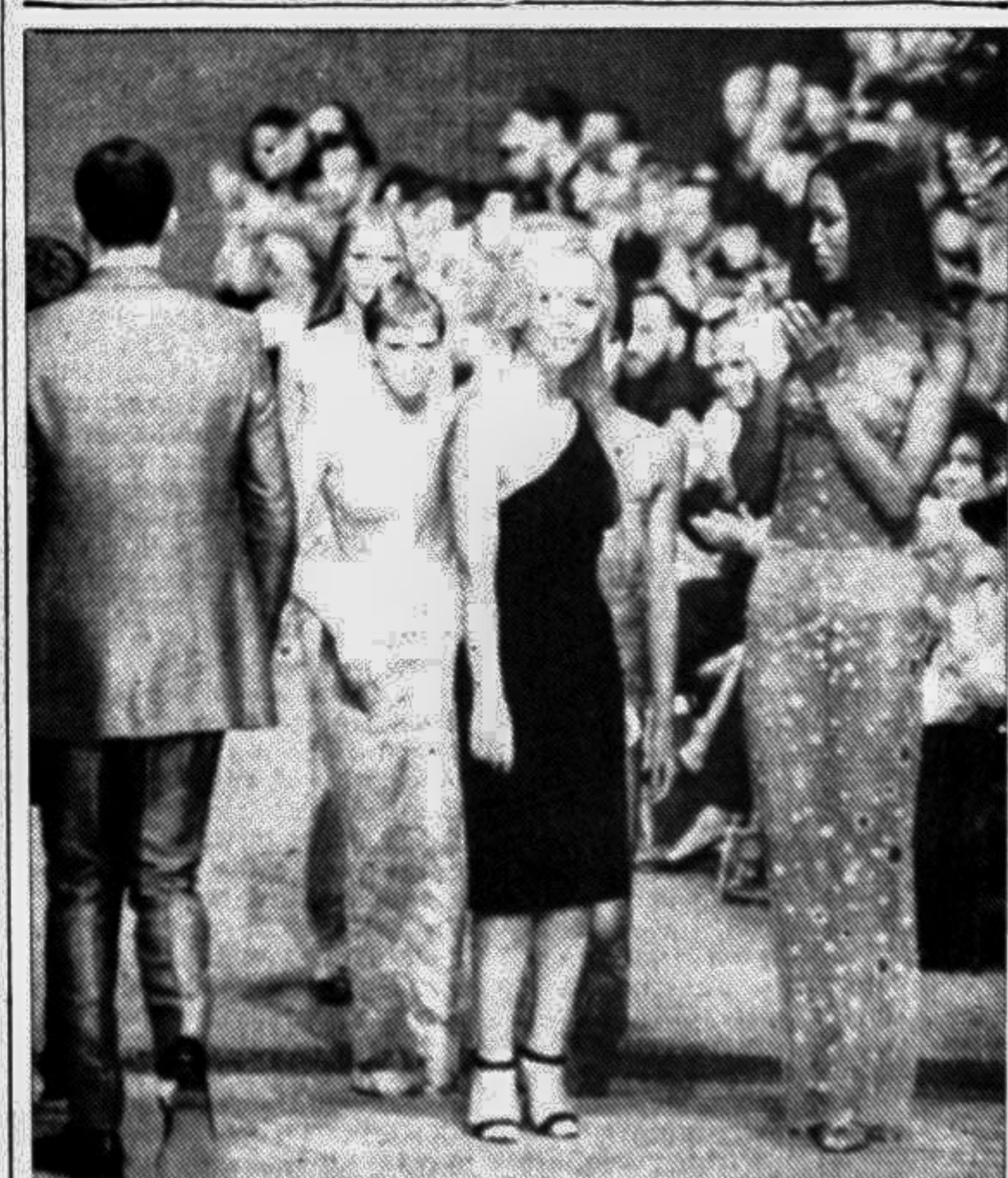
into a decisive break with the BJP," an unnamed Tamil Nadu politician was quoted as saying by The Pioneer newspaper in the state capital Chennai.

However, efforts to dislodge the Vajpayee government got a boost from Sonia Gandhi's first explicit statement of her party's willingness to form the government.

Former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, former Defence Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, former Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav and the Left parties have offered their support to an alternative coalition led by the Congress party. Former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati too said her pro-Dalit (lower caste) Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) would throw its weight behind a Congress party attempt to form the government.

However, the Congress party was said to be still shy of making a bid. Analysts noted that the party did not want to be seen as denying office to the BJP and was aware that this could bring the BJP gains in a snap poll.

Senior Congress party leaders have stated in recent days that the party would do nothing to topple the government, but would not back from "discharging its responsibility" in case the government collapsed on its own.



Italian designer Donatella Versace is applauded by top model Naomi Campbell at the end of her Spring-Summer 1999 Men's Collection Fashion Show in Milan Sunday. — AP/UNB photo