

International

Another bid to deceive and cheat, says David Leavy



Iraqi women sing as they stand under a picture of President Saddam Hussein during a rehearsal for a military show at the Saddam Stadium in Baghdad on Saturday. Soldiers and hundreds of Iraqis prepared a show for the Baghdad Day, a local holiday, celebrated on Sunday. UN special envoy Prakash Shah announced on Saturday afternoon that Iraq will allow UN weapons inspections to resume. — AP/UNB photo

US rejects Iraqi proposal

WASHINGTON, Nov 15: As waves of US warplanes headed toward the Persian Gulf in preparation for air strikes, the White House rejected Iraq's proposal to resume weapons inspections. "It is unacceptable," the president's national security adviser said, reports AP. "We were poised to take military action and we remain poised to take military action," Sandy Berger said late Saturday. Indeed, President Bill Clinton had already approved a military attack when word of Saddam's letter surfaced as midday. "Once the train is set in motion, you can put on the brakes, and that's what happened," said a senior defense official at the Pentagon. The official, who declined to be further identified, would not say exactly what military orders had been given, but B-52 bombers had taken off from Barksdale, Louisiana, at 4:38 am EST. Those aircraft can carry cruise missiles that would be used in the opening salvos of a missile strike. Eight Navy vessels also stood by ready to launch hundreds of Tomahawk cruise missiles. Berger said Clinton would consult with allies abroad on the next steps. The UN Security Council also met to consider the day's dramatic moves. Berger talked to reporters at the White House after a five-hour session of Clinton's national security advisers to analyze Saddam Hussein's letter. The Iraqi letter, addressed to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, said UN weapons inspectors could resume their work, but it also linked cooperation with a further chance to achieve justice by lifting sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. National Security Council spokesman David Leavy said the national security team was unequivocal in its conclusion that the Iraqis' offer was "clearly another step in their effort to lie, deceive and cheat." Berger decided it as having "more holes than Swiss cheese." "We have every reason to be skeptical because we've seen this before — broken and unfulfilled promises, so-called positive answers that turn negative over time," Berger said. "We have been more than patient." "The Iraqi letter is neither unequivocal nor unconditional... It is unacceptable," Berger said. In order to avoid an American attack, Berger said Iraq must give a "clear statement that they will fully comply" with UN weapons inspections. The national security adviser said Saddam had had "Plenty of opportunity to demonstrate that he's prepared to come back in compliance" with UN demands that he has disposed of his weapons of mass destruction.

China against use of force against Iraq

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 15: China said Sunday it is "absolutely against" using force against Iraq in a standoff over its refusal to cooperate with UN weapons inspectors, reports AP. Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan announced his government's position after a meeting with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who said American forces were poised to attack Iraq. "Tang said China had sent a letter to Iraq urging its government to 'think carefully' and restart talks with UN officials. However, he added, 'The Chinese government is absolutely against the use of force. This is a very clear stand on this issue. It is pointless to use force to resolve the current situation.'"

Israel working on 'ethnic' biological arms to kill Arabs

LONDON, Nov 15: Israel is working on an "ethnic" biological weapon which will hit Arabs and not Jews by distinguishing between their genetic differences, the Sunday Times reported, say AFP. Quoting Israeli military sources and Western intelligence services, the report said researchers were trying to isolate distinctive 'Arab' genes in order to develop a virus which would target them specifically. The programme based in the top secret Ness Ziona Germ Warfare Laboratory, south of Tel Aviv, is complicated by the fact that Jews and Arabs are genetically close, both being of Semitic origin, the report said. Nevertheless an anonymous Israeli scientist was quoted by the Sunday Times as saying that researchers had "succeeded in pinpointing a particular characteristic in the genetic profile of certain Arab communities particularly the Iraqi people." The virus could be transmitted by air or water, the paper said, comparing the Israeli researches with those recently revealed to have been carried out by the white minority apartheid government in South Africa in order to single out black people.

Sonia Gandhi, wife of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, pays homage to Jawahar Lal Nehru's memorial at Shanti Van in New Delhi on Saturday. India celebrated 109th birth anniversary of Nehru yesterday. — AP/UNB photo

Feasibility of new N-reactor in Sydney 'grossly unrealistic'

SYDNEY, Nov 15: An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the feasibility of a new nuclear reactor in Sydney, was "grossly unrealistic" and "tortuously manipulated," US experts say in a damning report, says AFP. Fallout from a meltdown at the planned reactor could reach millions of people, causing more than 10,000 long-term cancer deaths, the study shows. The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation plans to replace an old existing facility at residential Lucas Heights, in Sydney's west, with a new 300 million dollar (189 million US) reactor. Its draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) said a nuclear reactor would be safe for Sydney and the environment, but top United States nuclear scientist Daniel Hirsch ridiculed the findings in an independent report commissioned by a local council. Hirsch, former nuclear policy adviser at the University of California, said the EIS dismisses a number of serious accident scenarios "with a wave of the hand," concentrating instead on "travel" possibilities. "Extraordinary assumptions, never clearly disclosed, were used to force down the estimated consequences of accidents at the facility in a futile effort to support a preordained safety conclusion", he says in the confidential report, extracts of which were published in Sydney's Sunday Telegraph.

Son of ex-Canadian PM missing

MICHEL TRUDEAU, son of former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, was missing and presumed drowned after an avalanche swept him and fellow skiers into a lake police said on Saturday, AP reports from Nelson, British Columbia. Trudeau, 23, was with three friends who were caught in the snow slide in British Columbia's Kootenay Mountains on Friday. The three others were picked up by helicopter on Saturday after they made their way to shore. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said Trudeau was last seen in the water and described the chances of finding him alive as "very slim."

China signs sat launch accord

A Chinese state-run company has signed an agreement to launch a communications satellite for Hong Kong's Asia Satellite Telecommunication Co. Ltd., a Hong Kong newspaper reported on Sunday, AP says from Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Standard quoted Wang Liheng, vice president of China Great Wall Industry Corp, as saying his company's agreement with Asia Sat was signed on Saturday. The agreement provides for "the reservation of a launch opportunity for the launch of an Asia Sat satellite" on a Long March 3-B rocket from the Xichang Launch Centre in Southwestern Sichuan province, Wang was quoted as saying.

Lankan move to block LTTE base in SA

COLOMBO, Nov 15: Sri Lanka has sent its foreign minister to South Africa for talks aimed at preventing the island's Tamil Tiger separatists establishing a base there, a press report here said today, reports AFP. Lakshman Kadirgamar left for Pretoria on Saturday on a mission aimed at blocking the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) shifting their international secretariat from London to South Africa, the Sunday Times said. There was no immediate word from the Sri Lankan Foreign Office about the announced visit of the minister, who warned earlier that the LTTE was seeking the support of the Indian community in South Africa to raise money. The Foreign Ministry said earlier this month that it believed the LTTE was shifting its operations from London to South Africa because of new anti-terrorism laws in Britain. There has been no reaction.

Russia must maintain its nuclear forces

MOSCOW, Nov 15: Russia's armed forces can not fight a large-scale war with conventional weapons and the country must maintain its nuclear forces at all costs, presidential hopeful Alexander Lebed said on Sunday, reports AP. Analysts say persistent infighting in the ruling coalition runaway inflation which has made even staple vegetables a luxury for the poor and local issues will dominate the polls. Newspapers and surveys have predicted a Congress victory in New Delhi and Rajasthan, a desert state where India conducted its nuclear tests in May and in tiny Christian-majority Mizoram. "New Delhi and Rajasthan are now ruled by the BJP, which however is tipped to oust the Congress in Madhya Pradesh, India's largest state. The BJP is a minor player in Mizoram. The desperate opposition smearing the possibility of ousting the BJP has hurriedly begun to close ranks. On Friday India's most popular Communist leader Jyoti Basu shared a platform for the first time with Congress president Sonia Gandhi and called for a new alliance to take on the Hindu nationalists. But few are convinced.

Myanmar FM replaced in Cabinet reshuffle

YANGON, Nov 15: Myanmar's military government has replaced the foreign minister and appointed a new deputy prime minister in a Cabinet reshuffle, an official statement said on Sunday, reports AP. The junta also gave five Supreme Court justices "permission to retire from duties," and appointed four new justices. The changes came almost exactly a year after a major restructuring of the country's administration, in which the junta also changed its name from the State Law and Order Restoration Council to the State Peace and Development Council. In the new changes, effective on Saturday, Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaaw was replaced by Wing Aung, Myanmar's ambassador in London. Ohn Gyaaw, a career diplomat, had been appointed foreign minister in September 1989. The official announcement said he was permitted to retire from his duties. He is 68. Meanwhile, the minister for military affairs, Lt. Gen. Tin Hla, took on the additional post of deputy prime minister.

UN should send peacekeepers to East Timor

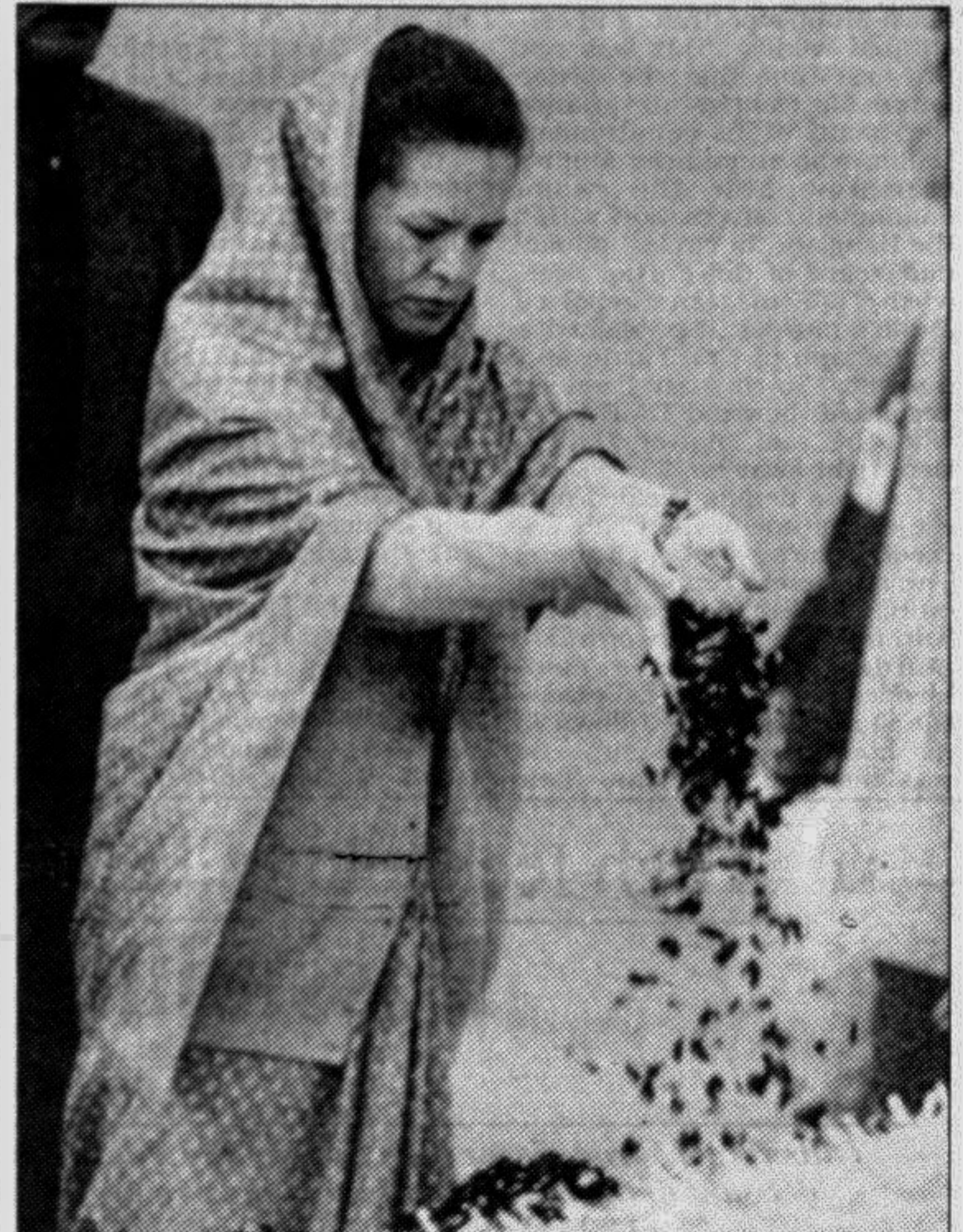
JAKARTA, Nov 15: Imprisoned East Timorese guerrilla leader Xanana Gusmao has suggested the United Nations send peacekeepers to the trouble island territory as part of programme for independence, a report said Sunday, reports AP. In an interview published in The Jakarta Post newspaper Gusmao outlined a 3 1/2 to 4 1/2-year timetable for self-determination for East Timor, a former Portuguese colony invaded in 1975 by Indonesia, which annexed it the following year. Gusmao is serving a 20-year sentence in a Jakarta prison for fighting Indonesian troops. He said six to 18 months was needed for the withdrawal of Indonesian troops and East Timorese guerrilla forces as well as the disarmament of various paramilitary groups. During that time an East Timorese police should be set up "as part of a possible deployment of peacekeeping forces." A second period of three years would be needed for "national reconciliation." During this time public should be given political education, East Timor's administration should be rebuilt and a national census conducted. East Timor has been wracked by two decades of guerrilla warfare and human rights abuses. The UN is currently sponsoring talks on East Timor's future between Indonesia and Portugal. Indonesia has offered to grant a form of autonomy to East Timor, but has ruled out full independence as an option. It has also rejected demands by separatists that a referendum be conducted on its future. Xanana, however, was adamant that East Timorese should be allowed to vote.

16 die during week-long unrest

JAKARTA, Nov 15: A short time ago, Indonesia's armed forces chief Gen. Wiranto was being hailed a white knight for promising to clean up the military's bad human rights record and for supporting democratic change, reports AP. But after days of bloody student protests and outbreaks of rioting in Jakarta, many on Sunday demanded that he quit. At least 16 people have died during the past week of unrest, including half a dozen students shot dead by troops and police when thousands tried to march on Parliament against a special government assembly. One of their key demands: get the military out of politics. The worst erupted Friday night when security personnel fired volleys of shots, as well as tear gas and water cannons, at students over many hours. Army and police chiefs insist their personnel had no live ammunition and fired off only plastic bullets. Nevertheless, this proved lethal at short range and the death toll has angered many despite his protestation that the men were merely upholding the law. "Hang Wiranto!" chanted students after they buried their dead. "Shock, grief, anger," was the headline in Sunday's Jakarta Post newspaper. "As the highest person in the (armed forces) hierarchy, Wiranto should take the blame for the violence. He must resign immediately," said Amien Rais, a prominent Muslim leader and opposition figure who plans to run for the presidency. "The security policy pursued by Gen. Wiranto was totally irresponsible and has endangered the life of the nation," a group of pro-democracy activists said in a statement. Wiranto restored order on the streets of the capital of 11 million on Sunday. Armored personnel carriers

Opposition hails accord to end political stalemate in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH, Nov 15: Cambodia's third-biggest political party, set to become the sole opposition force in Parliament, on Sunday cautiously welcomed an agreement that will place strongman Hun Sen at the head of a new coalition government, reports AP. The opposition party led by former finance minister Sam Rainsy, which placed a distant third in a July election, applauded King Norodom Sihanouk's efforts to end a three-month-long political stalemate by brokering a deal Friday between its opposition ally FUNCINPEC and Hun Sen's ruling party. But the Sam Rainsy Party remained cautious, noting that many of the details of the new deal had yet to be ironed out in the deal, including the makeup of Hun Sen's coalition government and the exact role of a new Senate in the Cambodian legislature. The Sam Rainsy Party welcomed the progress made at FUNCINPEC and the Cambodian People's Party... toward



Armoured personnel carriers block the street leading to the Presidential Palace as Monas, the national monument, is seen in the background in Jakarta on Sunday. Streets of the capital were quiet on Sunday morning following the heaviest rioting in the capital since May when angry mobs vented their frustration at the government. — AP/UNB photo

Protestors call for Indonesia's military chief to quit

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Armoured personnel carriers block the street leading to the Presidential Palace as Monas, the national monument, is seen in the background in Jakarta on Sunday. Streets of the capital were quiet on Sunday morning following the heaviest rioting in the capital since May when angry mobs vented their frustration at the government. — AP/UNB photo