resume.

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 mili-tary attack when word of Saddam's letter surfaced as mid-

"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 Berger gave no hint of when -Saddam Hussein's letter. or whether - Clinton would fol-The Iraqi letter, addressed to low through with his threats and launch the airstrikes. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, said UN weapons inspec-"That is not something that I'm tors could resume their work. going to comment on. There cerbut it also linked cooperation tainly is not unlimited time (for with "a further chance to Saddam to comply). We have said all along that we are ready achieve justice by lifting sancto proceed, but we will proceed tions" imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. on the basis of OUR timetable."

National Security Council Berger said. spokesman David Leavy said The ongoing crisis prompted the national security team was Clinton to cancel a trip to Malaysia for an Asian-Pacific unequivocal in its conclusion economic summit. He sent Vice that the Iraqis' offer was "clearly another step in their ef-President Al Gore in his stead. fort to lie, deceive and cheat." Military planners for the Joint Berger derided it as having Chiefs of Staff said the more than 130 aircraft and 21,500 "more holes than Swiss troops ordered to the Gulf last Cheese. week would continue on their "We have every reason to be skeptical because we've seen way. Already in the Gulf area

this before - broken and unful-

filled promises, so-called posi-

give a "clear statement that they

will fully comply" with UN

The national security advisor

said Saddam has had "Plenty of

opportunity to demonstrate

that he's prepared to come back

in compliance" with UN de-

mands that he has disposed of

his weapons of mass destruc-

weapons inspections.

sels armed with long-range tive answers that turn negative over time," Berger said. "We Tomahawk cruise missiles. have been more than patient." "We're still bumping along. All "The Iraqi letter is neither unour preparations, all our deequivocal nor unconditional ... ployments, are going on as It is unacceptable," Berger said. scheduled," said a general offi-In order to avoid an American cer, who spoke on condition of attack, Berger said Iraq must

anonymity. In preparation for a strike, a dozen Air Force-F-16CG air-toground attack jets left Hill Air Force Base in Utah late Friday, followed in pre-dawn hours by six B-52 heavy bombers from Barksdale Air Force Base. Louisiana. Another six were to follow from Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota, air force officials said.

are 23,500 troops and 23 war-

ships including the eight ves-

The B-52s, headed for Diego Garcia island in the Indian Ocean, can be armed with 3,000 pound (1360 kilogram) cruise missiles with a range of 1,500 miles (2,400 kilometers). weapons expected to strike Iraqi air defense units as the opening salvo in an air strike. A dozen Air Force F-15C/D fighters and a similar number of F-16C/J attack jets also roared off for the Gulf. As well, two RC-135 reconnaissance and electronic warfare planes left Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, Nebraska,

They were to be followed by F-117 Stealth fighters, B-1 bombers and support planes from bases around the country. Bombers and fighters being deployed to the Gulf will bolster forces already set to hit Iraq's potential for developing and using nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

Saddam insisted in a statement Friday, his first since halting the monitoring of weapons sites Oct. 31, that his "just and balanced demands" must be met an apparent reference to lifting an 8-year-old UN trade embargo and other economic sanctions. But the administration brushed that comment aside. Lockhart said there was "nothing new and nothing positive or productive" in what Saddam, had to say.

The latest crisis, one of several has been building since Aug. 5 when Iraq prohibited field in-

spections for nuclear, biological and chemical weapons it is compelled to eliminate under Security Council resolutions passed after the 1991 Gulf War. The aircraft carrier USS Enterprise is en route to the Gulf with Marine amphibious task

An additional 3,000 US combat troops from Fort Stewart, Georgia, will join 1.500 already stationed in Kuwait to help protect

its borders. 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 Jiazuan announced his government's opposition 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 govern-

ment 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.

3 Pak children JAMMU, Nov 15. Indian border guards have repatriated three Pakistani children who had strayed into Indian terri-

BSF repatriates

tory by mistake, reports IANS. "This was a goodwill ges-ture," said a senior Border Security Force (BSF) official who arranged for the return of the three children - Adeel Ahmad Khurram Sajjad and Salem Sajjad — on Friday evening even as firing reportedly raged on from the Pakistani side in the Devigarh sector, about 50 km from here.

The BSF, which mans the 210 km international border in the Jammu region with Pakistan, had taken the three boys into custody after they were found in Indian territory. Initial questioning revealed that they were "innocents" and deserved to be repatriated, the BSF official told reporters.

The boys were cutting grass on the Pakistani side when they strayed into India as there was no demarcation. "We stepped into your fields not knowing that we had crossed the border, 16-year-old Khurram, the eldest of the boys, told a group of journalists before returning. The boys said their experience in India was "pleasant" and that they were treated well. They even received gifts from the

"We were looked after well and that has changed our opinion about the people in India,' Khurram said. "We are going with happy experiences. We were sad that we were here without our parents. I missed my parents very much." The three boys waved to the Indian guards who escorted them to the



Iraqi women sing as they stand under a picture of Presi-

dent 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

- AP/UNB photo

Georgian finance minister resigns: Georgian Finance Minister Mikhail Chkusaeli, appointed to the post a year and half ago, stepped down on Saturday with no explanation for his decision. ITAR-Tass news agency reported,

AFP says from Moscow. President Edard Shevardnadze accepted the resignation, adding that the Caucasian republic was undergoing a complex process of democratic development and change of officials connected with the coming to power of a team of reformers.

Chkuaseli, 28, said his only regret was not resigning earlier. adding that he would have so in September had Georgia not agreed then to follow a series of guidelines stipulated by the International Monetary Fund, which Chkusaeli supports.

50 missing as ferry sinks in Bone Bay: At least 50 people were missing after a ferry with an estimated 160 passengers and crew on board sank off Sulawesi island, police and news reports said on Sunday AP reports from Jakarta. The boat, KMP Rahmat Buhari went down on Friday night in

Bone Bay, about 1.530 km northeast of Jakarta. The 2.000-ton vessel had been on a routine trip from Bajoe in South Sulawesi to Kolaka in the neighbouring province of Southeast Sulawesi, said Rachman, an officer at the local Sea Police station.

Social activists stage rally in KL:
More than 300 social activists from several countries demonstrated in downtown Kuala Lumpur on Sunday at the close of a People's Summit in the Malaysian capital. AP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

"The people united will never be defeated," the demonstrators chanted. The People's Summit drew more than 600 participants from 30 countries. They closed their six-day conference on Sunday with a declaration opposing rampant global business expan-

Serbian movie wins best film award: Serbian director Srjdan Dragojovic's movie "The Wounds," won the top prize at the Stockholm International Film Festival on

Saturday, AP reports from Stockholm. The movie's main actors, Milan Maric and Dusan Pekic, also shared the jury's male acting awards. Dragojovic's film is about two boys living in Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia, in the early 1990's. Both boys are strongly influenced by series they watch on TV and one of them shoots the other. It was the second time Dragojevic won the festival's Bronze Horse. His earlier win was in 1996 with "Pretty Village, Pretty Flame.

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 executes 3 for robbery: Three men convicted of preying on car drivers in China's capital have been executed, the official newspaper People's Daily reported on Sunday, AP says from Beijing.

Liu Xin'an, Wu Xinhui and Wang Long were recently executed for having committed a series of armed car robberies that resulted in the deaths of at least three people and damage to many vehicles, the report said.

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.

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, savs 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 "travil" 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.

NEW DELHI, Nov 15: India's

Hindu nationalists are bracing

for make-or-break elections

which could topple the fragile

ruling coalition amid ground-

breaking political realign-

ments, analysts say, reports

Vajpayee's seven-month-old

multi-party government could

face a crisis if his Bharatiya

Janata Party (BJP Indian Peo-

ple's Party) fares poorly in the

ernments in New Delhi City and

three states will be the first

popularity test since Vajpayee

took office in March at the head

of BJP-led coalition govern-

Analysts and pre-poll sur-

veys say a resurgent Congress.

the main opposition party led

by Italian born Sonia Gandhi,

could try toppling the govern-

ment if it scores major gains in

The spectre of a change of

The elections for local gov-

November 25 polls.

ment.

the polls.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari

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

> 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 unannounced 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.

BJP bracing for make-or-break polls

guard in the federal government

has fuelled fresh infighting in

the BJP-led coalition while

Congress leaders are already

ister Vajpayee will survive if

the BJP can keep any defeat

Analysts believe Prime Min-

discussing post-poll scenarios.

The US government last year designated the LTTE as a "foreign terrorist organisation, making it illegal for the guerillas to raise money there for their separatist war at home.

Three South African diplomats based in the Indian capital New Delhi were here last week for talks with officials and non-governmental oranisations following calls from Colombo to investigate Tiger links in their country. The issue of the LTTE has

strained relations between the two countries but the government insisted that it was not confronting the South African government.

ROK cruise ship arrives in DPRK

SEOUL, Nov 15: A chartered South Korean cruise ship arrived in North Korea Sunday on a test run for sightseeing tours of the reclusive communist country's scenic east coast, tour organizers said, reports AP.

The 28,700-ton Hyudai Kumkang arrived at Jang Jon Port near Diamond Mountain on the North's eastern coast, 12 hours after leaving South Korea's Donghae port, said Seoul's Hyundai group, which is organizing the tours.

Instead of taking a four-hour coastal route, the ship took a longer route.

Analysts say persistent in-

fighting in the ruling coalition

runaway inflation which has

made even staple vegetables a

luxury for the poor and local is-

have predicted a Congress vic-

tory in New Delhi and Ra-

jasthan, a desert state where

India conducted its nuclear

tests in May and in tiny Chris-

are now ruled by the BJP, which

however is tipped to oust the

Congress in Madhya Pradesh.

India's largest state. The BJP is

smelling the possibility of oust-

ing the BJP, has hurriedly be-

lar Communist leader Jyoti

Basu shared a platform for the

first time with Congress presi-

dent Sonia Gandhi and called

for a new alliance to take on the

The desperate opposition

On Friday India's most popu-

a minor player in Mizoram.

gun to close ranks.

Hindu nationalists.

New Delhi and Rajasthan

tian majority Mizoram.

Newspapers and surveys

sues will dominate the polls.

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

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.

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 Gyaw was replaced by Wing Aung. Myanmar's ambassador in London.

Ohn Gyaw, 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.



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

'UN should send peacekeepers to East Timor'

JAKARTA, Nov 15: Imprisoned East Timorese guerilla leader Xanana Gusmao has suggested the United Nations send peacekeepers to the trouble half 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

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 guerilla 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 guerilla warfare and human rights abuses.

The UN is currently sponsoring talks on East Timor's future between Indonesia and Portu-

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.

Opposition hails accord to end

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 threemonth-long political stalemate by brokering a deal Friday between its opposition ally FUNCINPEC and Hun Sen's rul-

ing 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 welcomes the progress made by FUNCINPEC and the Cambodian People's Party... toward

the formation of a legal government in Cambodia," the party said in a statement. "However, there is still much to be done. Many more issues must be decided before Cambodia can move forward in a democratic direction.

Hun Sen's CPP narrowly won the election, but the party needs support from Prince Norodom Ranariddh's FUNC-INPEC party to gain the twothirds vote in the National Assembly required for approval of a new government.

The ruling party agreed to give Ranariddh the presidency of the National Assembly in Friday's deal, despite its majority in the legislature.

Key to the compromise was an agreement for a constitutional amendment creating a new Senate to be led by the president of Hun Sen's ruling party. Chea Sim. The king will initially appoint the Senate's

The Sam Rainsy party did not attend the two day summit at the king's lalace.

change, reports AP.

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.

night when security personnel fired volleys of shots, as well as tear gas and water cannons, at students over many hours.

The worst erupted Friday

sist their personnel had no live ammunition and fired off only plastic bullets.

down to a narrow margin. "But if the BJP is routed, even in just two states, such a defeat will be seen as a vote against the centre, analysts GVLN Rao told AFP. "It will then face major re-

verses and uneasiness in the ruling coalition will grow. There will be some partners of the BJP who will then be looking for new avenues. Some of them will try to

distance themselves from BJP. A visibly shaky prime minister has been insisting that the elections, in New Delhi and the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Mizoram are not a referendum on his fragile gov-

ernment. But few are convinced.

16 die during week-long unrest

Protestors call for Indonesia's military chief to quit

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

But after days of bloody stu-dent protests and outbreaks of rioting in Jakarta, many on Sunday demanded that he quit.

run for the presidency.

Army and police chiefs inthe streets of the capital of 11 million on Sunday.

Nevertheless, this proved lethal at short range and the death toll has angered many despite his protestation that this men were merely upholding the "Hang Wiranto!" chanted students after they buried their

"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 "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

Armored personnel carriers

and small tanks were stationed near the state palace and thousands of troops stood guard at the Parliament building and across the city. President BJ Habibie has or-

dered Wiranto, who is also defense minister, to take stern action against troublemakers who he says tried to overthrow his 6-month-old government. Wiranto's troops moved

within a few hours to end rioting on Saturday - much quicker and more decisively than they did six months ago during riots that resulted in 1,200 deaths and helped force Habibie's authoritarian predecessor President Suharto to step A government report into

those riots was released last month. It castigated the military's leadership and accused some army personnel of doing nothing to stop the violence or even of encouraging mobs to loot and burn.



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